HARRISON GRAY OTIS

By Samuel Eliot Morison

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THE LIFE AND LETTERS
OF
HARRISON GRAY OTIS
1765–1848

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME II

Harrison Gray Otis

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF
HARRISON GRAY OTIS
FEDERALIST
1765–1848

BY

SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON, PH.D. (HARV.)

WITH PORTRAITS AND OTHER
ILLUSTRATIONS

VOL. II

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1913

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Published November 1913

CONTENTS

XVIII. Massachusetts Wrecks the Embargo. 1808–1809, Æt. 43 1

Failure of Embargo — The Force Act — Otis proposes a Northern Convention — The Essex Junto in control — "Patriotick Proceedings" — Congress and Jefferson yield — Letter of Otis.

XIX. Federalist Tactics under Madison and Gerry. 1809–1811, Æt. 44–46 17

Madison's policy — Canning blocks a settlement — Francis James Jackson — His reception in Boston — Madison turns to France — Non-intercourse Act — Nullification meeting in Boston — Otis and the Gerry administration — Letters of New York Federalists and F. J. Jackson.

XX. The Eve of War. 1811–1812, Æt. 46–47 . 32

Rise of war spirit — Quincy's war policy — Otis's endeavors to prevent war — His influence on repeal of the Orders in Council — Declaration of war — Federalist view of it — "Henry Plot" — Baltimore riots.

XXI. Boston Federalism and the War. 1812–1814, Æt. 47–49 52

Policy of no participation — British sympathies — Celebrations — Town meetings — State Convention movement — Presidential election — Militia policy — Combination of bankers — Spring elections of 1813 — Otis's answer of the House — Ideas and grievances of New England Federalism in 1814 — Correspondence on government loans.

XXII. Hartford Convention: I. Origin. 1808–1814, Æt. 43–48 78

Conditions that produced the Hartford Convention — Precedents — Proposed in 1808 by Otis — In

1812 by Gouverneur Morris — In January, 1814, by Old Hampshire — Debates in General Court — Lloyd's Report — Referred to the people.

XXIII. Hartford Convention: II. The Summons. May–December, 1814, Æt. 48–49 93

Spring elections of 1814 — Convention postponed by legislature — Massachusetts invaded — Attitude of Boston Federalists — Special session of legislature — Otis's committee summons the Hartford Convention — Connecticut accepts — Rhode Island — New Hampshire and Vermont.

XXIV. Hartford Convention: III. Objects . . 110

Satisfying the people — Defense of New England — Amendments to the Constitution — Constitutional Convention — Peace — The Essex Junto programme — Expel the West and reunite the "good old thirteen states."

XXV. Hartford Convention: IV. Members and Sessions. December 15, 1814 – January 5, 1815, Æt. 49 125

Public opinion of the Convention — The members — Secret sessions — Secession not a subject of debate — Otis's opening speech — Committee on a General Project — Committee of Seven.

XXVI. Hartford Convention: V. The Report. January 3, 1815 147

Question of authorship — Secession deprecated — Nullification recommended — Arrangement for local defense — Indictment of Democratic policy — Amendments proposed — Public opinion of the Report — What the Convention did not do — Attitude toward secession.

XXVII. Hartford Convention: VI. The Three Ambassadors. January–May, 1815, Æt. 49 . . 160

Action of Massachusetts on the Convention — Question of defense — Appointment of commissioners to the Federal Government — The

"hatched egg" — Journey to Washington — Effect of news of New Orleans and of peace on Otis — Question of "what might have been" — Democratic satire — War claims and publicans — Gouty departure — Conclusion on New England sectionalism.

XXVIII. Hartford Convention: VII. Correspondence and Documents. 1814–1815 . . . 174

Correspondence between C. W. Hare, R. G. Harper, Gouverneur Morris, J. T. Gilman, and Otis — Rev. Joseph Lyman to John Treadwell — Otis and Longfellow to their wives during the sessions — L. B. Sturges to R. M. Sherman — Nathan Dane's "Schedules" — Reports of Commissioners to Governor Strong — Otis's correspondence with A. J. Dallas.

XXIX. The Era of Good Feelings. 1815–1822, Æt. 50–56 200

A new era commences — Otis's policy of reconciliation — Effect of membership in the Hartford Convention — Monroe's inauguration — His visit to Boston — Otis in the United States Senate — Social life in Washington — The Massachusetts Claim.

XXX. Slavery Extension. 1797–1821, Æt. 32–56 219

Otis's attitude toward slavery — Slavery debates in the Fifth Congress — Extension to Mississippi Territory — Federalism and the slave representation — The Missouri question — Otis votes blindly — "Let the Democracy *lead*" — Otis's speech on the Maine-Missouri Bill — Speech on Missouri's constitution.

XXXI. The Decline and Fall of the Federal Party. 1820–1828, Æt. 55–64 234

Maine and Massachusetts — The Constitutional Convention of 1820 — City Charter for Boston — Otis defeated for Mayor, 1822 — Indian summer of Federalism in Massachusetts — Otis's cam-

paign for Governor, 1823 — Disappearance of the Federal Party — The Election of 1828 and the Hartford Convention — Controversy with J. Q. Adams — Elected Mayor of Boston — Letters of T. H. Perkins, John Lowell, and Otis.

XXXII. Abolition, and a Conservative Solution. 1829–1839, Æt. 64–74 256

Otis and "Walker's Appeal" — and the "Liberator" — Appeals from the South — Proposition for gradual emancipation — Anti-abolition meeting of 1835 — Becomes pro-slavery — Letters of B. F. Hunt, R. Y. Hayne, and Otis.

XXXIII. Mayoralty — Tariff — Closing Years. 1829–1848, Æt. 64–83 284

Policy as Mayor of Boston — The humanitarian movement — Becomes a protectionist — Profits in manufacturing — Nullification — Emily Marshall — Domestic misfortunes — Whig politics — Familiar letters to George Harrison — Temperance — Campaign of 1848 — "Letter to the People of Massachusetts" — Death — Estimate of his career.

Bibliography 311

Index 319

ILLUSTRATIONS

HARRISON GRAY OTIS (*Photogravure*) . . *Frontispiece*

From a portrait by Gilbert Stuart, 1814. In the possession of Harrison Gray Otis, Esq.

CARICATURE OF THE HARTFORD CONVENTION . . . 78

From a contemporary lithograph by William Charles. In the author's possession.

SIGNATURES OF THE MEMBERS OF THE HARTFORD CONVENTION 136

Facsimile of the last page of the official copy of the Report of the Hartford Convention, in the Massachusetts Archives.

"A TRIP TO WASHINGTON CITY" 168

From a contemporary broadside, in the Massachusetts Historical Society.

EMILY MARSHALL 296

From a portrait by Chester Harding. In the possession of Eben Stevens, Esq.

ERRATA. VOLUME II

Page 103, 7th line from foot of page, for "Massachusetts," *read* "New England."

Page 119, 6th line from foot of page, *delete* "New."

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF HARRISON GRAY OTIS

CHAPTER XVIII

MASSACHUSETTS WRECKS THE EMBARGO

1808–1809, ÆT. 43

When the Tenth Congress assembled for its winter session, on November 7, 1808, no sensible man in the United States doubted that the embargo was a failure. It had destroyed the commerce and impoverished the sailors and shipowners it was supposed to protect; as an instrument of coercion it had proved futile. Napoleon applauded and even presumed to enforce the embargo by his insolent Bayonne Decree, ordering the confiscation of all American vessels that entered his ports. In England, the embargo distressed the manufacturers and their laborers, but protected from American competition the shipping interests, which were closer to the ear of government. George Canning, with consummate irony, stated in a diplomatic note that "His majesty . . . would gladly have facilitated its removal as a measure of inconvenient restriction upon the American people."[1] The only practical result so far had been a revival of Federalist ascendancy over New England.

Furthermore, the embargo could not be enforced in Massachusetts. Judge Davis of the District Court had pronounced it constitutional, but no jury could be found to convict alleged violations of its provisions. Jefferson

[1] H. Adams, *United States*, IV, 337.

and his Southern followers in Congress were aware of this dilemma, and on December 8, 1808, Senator Giles of Virginia introduced a bill providing for the enforcement of the embargo by arbitrary and tyrannical measures, compared to which the old Sedition Act was a mild piece of legislation. Party feeling, pride of opinion, and the determination of political theorists to maintain their system at all costs, forced the bill through Congress,[2] and on January 9, 1809, Jefferson affixed his signature to it.

This "Force Act," as the Federalists called it, required coasting vessels to give bonds to the amount of six times the value of the vessel and cargo, before the cargo could even be loaded. The loading must be done under the eyes of an inspector, who might arbitrarily refuse permission to sail after all conditions were satisfied. By section 9, "the whole country was placed under the arbitrary will of government officials."[3] Collectors were given power to seize and confiscate goods on land or sea, "in any manner apparently on their way toward the territory of a foreign nation, or the vicinity thereof, or toward a place whence such articles are intended to be transported." The collectors were to be immune against legal liability for their actions. The man responsible for this provision, so contrary to the American conception of popular rights and official accountability, was Albert Gallatin, who in the Fifth Congress had been wont to denounce the most innocent act of executive discretion as tyrannical and monarchical. The embargo itself was opposed to every theory of government upheld by Jefferson before his accession. Through the Force Act he now

[2] Senator Anderson of Tennessee wrote John Quincy Adams, January 3, 1809, that the Force Act was passed mainly to defy the Federalists, and apologized for it on the score of human nature. Orchard Cook wrote, January 1, that it was pushed through by mere party feeling. Adams MSS.

[3] H. Adams, *United States*, IV, 399.

exercised a power that no other president has wielded save in time of war. Entire communities in New England, which Jefferson considered "tainted with a general spirit of disobedience," were put under the ban; the amount of food that each state might import was regulated by him. When a shortage of flour took place in Massachusetts, Governor Sullivan had to beg Thomas Jefferson for permission to allow a supply to be brought from Virginia. No wonder that the Federalist press raved against this "wicked inconsistency."

Yet Jefferson's blind faith in his miserable experiment was unshaken. He refused to consider the substitution for it of any policy but war. In his annual message of November 8, 1808, he characteristically avoided mentioning the embargo, in order to throw on Congress the entire responsibility for it. He sought to divert public sentiment by recommending an appropriation of the much-vaunted surplus for a comprehensive scheme of internal improvements. To New England Federalists it seemed cruelly insulting to boast of prosperity while their section was suffering, and to propose squandering the public revenue for the benefit of the South and West, while refusing to provide an efficient navy to protect New England's commerce.

So palpable was the failure of the embargo that almost every Democrat from the Northern States was now in favor of its repeal. John Quincy Adams wrote his friends in Congress that the embargo must go, or New England would soon be up in arms against the national government.[4] The legislature of Massachusetts warned Congress as follows:

The evils which are menaced by the continuance of this policy, are so enormous and deplorable; the suspension of

[4] *N. E. Federalism*, 127–135; Adams's 2d MS. letter-book, 77–91.

commerce is so contrary to the habits of our people, and so repugnant to their feelings and interests, that they must soon become intolerable, and endanger our domestic peace, and the union of these States.[5]

New England was now ready to follow without reserve the leadership of Timothy Pickering. For a year Pickering had been planning to check the administration by turning against Jefferson and Madison their doctrine of state interposition and nullification, as expressed in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolves of 1798. The idea was covertly expressed in his published "Letter to his Constituents" of February 16, 1808, and boldly stated in the resolutions of the Essex Convention, over which he presided, on October 6.[6] Otis and the moderates so far had prevented their legislature from carrying out Pickering's desires. But just a week after the Force Bill was introduced in Congress, Otis wrote Josiah Quincy, the member from Boston, a letter which, as Henry Adams has rightly said, "enrolled him under Pickering's command"; a letter which reveals, six years before its accomplishment, a plan for a New England Convention, complete even to the place of meeting:

Boston, Dec. 15, 1808.

My dear Sir: —

* * * * * * * * * * *

Judging from appearances, there seems but little prospect of your preventing by any means a perseverance in the fatal and unheard-of policy on which the Administration seems fully bent, and it becomes of great importance that the New England Federalists should determine whether any aid can be

[5] *Am. State Papers, Com. & Nav.*, I, 728.

[6] "We firmly rely for relief on the wisdom and patriotism of our *STATE GOVERNMENT*, whom the people have placed as sentinels to guard our rights and privileges, from whatever quarter they may be invaded. We trust that *they* will take care that the Constitution of the United States be maintained in its *spirit* as well as in its letter." Salem *Gazette*, October 14, 1808.

furnished by the Legislatures of this session, and if beneficial effects are to be expected from this quarter, the objects should be defined and the means concerted. Our General Court will soon meet, and I doubt not the majority will require the bridle rather than the spur. If I am not mistaken, there will be found among them a fullness of zeal and indignation which can be mitigated only by giving them a direction and an object. This temper, you are sensible, must not be extinguished for want of sympathy, nor permitted to burst forth into imprudent excess. We must look to our friends in Congress for advice. You are together, and can best decide on such a course as would probably be agreed to by Connecticut, New Hampshire, etc., and no other ought to be adopted.

You are sensible how obnoxious Massachusetts, for a thousand reasons, has already become, and perceive more plainly than any of us the efforts which are made to mark and distinguish this State as the hot-bed of opposition, and this town as the citadel of a British faction. Perhaps our Legislature have said as much as is expedient for them to say, unless they are to be supported by a correspondent spirit in the other States. It would be a great misfortune for us to justify the obloquy of wishing to promote a separation of the States, and of being solitary in that pursuit. The delusion would spread among our wavering or timid adherents, and furnish great means of annoyance to our inveterate adversaries. It would change the next election, and secure the triumph of the dominant party. On the other hand, to do nothing will expose us to danger and contempt, our resolutions will seem to be a flash in the pan, and our apostate representatives will be justified in the opinions which they have doubtless inculcated of our want of union and of nerve. What then shall we do? In other words, what can Connecticut do? For we can and will come up to her tone. Is she ready to declare the Embargo and its supplementary chains unconstitutional, — to propose to their State the appointment of delegates to meet those from the other commercial States in convention at Hartford or elsewhere, for the purpose of providing some mode of relief that may not be *inconsistent with the union of these States*, to which we should adhere as long as possible? Shall New York be invited to join? and what shall be the proposed objects of such a convention?

It is my opinion, if the session of Congress terminates as we have reason to expect, that recourse ought to be had to some such plan as this, and that the only alternative is, in *your* dialect, submission. But some other State ought to make the proposal, for obvious reasons. Will you, my good sir, talk over this subject with our little Spartan band, and favor me in season with the result of your collected wisdom? Let me know whether you think any good effect would be produced *in Congress* by hints of this kind in the public papers. Sometimes I fear that we are so neutralized by our accursed adversaries, that all efforts will be ineffectual, and that we must sit down quietly and count the links of our chains; but then again their system appears so monstrous, so unprecedented, so ruinous, that I think the time will come that must make resistance a duty.

Remember me with respectful regards to my friend, Mr. Lloyd, and believe me very truly, dear sir, your obedient servant and friend,

H. G. Otis.[7]

This letter has given Otis the credit, or discredit, of paternity to the Hartford Convention scheme; but it is far more likely that the idea came from Pickering, who wrote Christopher Gore on January 8, 1809, "A convention of delegates from those States, [New England] including Vermont, seems obviously proper and necessary. Massachusetts and Connecticut can appoint their delegates with regular authority. In the other states they might be appointed by County conventions."[8] This project had been on foot since the spring, and was a matter of common conversation at Washington before Otis's letter was written.[9] But the vital question in regard to the

[7] E. Quincy, *J. Quincy*, 164.

[8] *N. E. Federalism*, 377.

[9] Christopher Gore wrote Rufus King on May 10, 1808 (*King*, v, 88): "A question is frequently asked here, whether the States to the East of the Delaware might not combine for the Purpose of preventing a war with Great Britain, and whether a portion of your democrats would not unite in this Object, and if this be probable, whether a convention of Merchants might not be advantageously assembled to deliberate on their affairs, and the Embarass-

proposed New England Convention of 1808 is not its paternity, but its object. What was the mode of relief, not "inconsistent with the union of these States," that Otis had in mind when writing the letter quoted above? Was it secession?

That is the answer supplied by John Quincy Adams, and by several historians of authority.[10] Adams was perfectly aware, as we have seen, that Pickering had plotted disunion in 1804, and, smarting as he was in 1808 with his expulsion from the Federal party, he very naturally believed that the same plot was on foot. Talk of secession, moreover, so was common in New England throughout the embargo period as to cause serious apprehension in

ments they suffer in consequence of their being deprived of their accustomed Business." Nahum Parker, Senator from New Hampshire, wrote John Quincy Adams from Washington on November 25 (Adams MSS.): "We have been informd that a meeting of a number has, or is soon to take place in Connecticut to agree on measures for calling a Convention in N. E. to devise means to effect a division of the Union." Adams replied, December 5 (MS. letter-book), that he had heard the rumor of a secessionist convention to be held at New Haven, but did not believe it would take place. The Washington *Federalist* printed an interesting article on this subject in November (quoted in Salem *Gazette* November 18, 1808): "It has been hinted from high authority, that there are letters in the city which inform that the eastern states are nearly ripe for a separation from the southern. It is represented that a convention is already organized, which only waits to know if the embargo is to be raised at the meeting of congress. If it is not raised, it is said that the convention will meet, declare the northern and eastern states independent, and proceed to form a separate government. We know the above statement to be false as respects the convention; but that a separation has been suggested in the northern states, is too true. The northern and eastern states must have the privilege of navigation, OR PERISH. . . . The New-England people know their own strength and consequence — they are a people who wish for peace, and court it . . . but when they are once roused, they are irresistible; — the world combined could not conquer them — and if they once declare themselves a separate nation, the union will be broken never to be repaired." The editor of the Salem *Gazette* added, that the idea that the Eastern States were ripe for a separation was unfounded, but "we do at the same time believe there is danger of their being obliged to consider themselves as discarded by their sisters. Many consider the separating blow to have been struck."

[10] E.g., H. Adams, *United States*, IV, 239, 403–07; McMaster, *United States*, III, 330.

many quarters.[11] President Dwight of Yale College preached on the text, "Come out therefore from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord," and the Boston *Gazette* announced, "It is better to suffer the AMPUTATION of a Limb, than to lose the WHOLE BODY. We must prepare for the operation."[12] But, as Adams himself acknowledged,[13] threats of disunion do not imply the existence of a disunion plot. And the only positive evidence which he was ever able to bring forward in favor of his supposition was the testimony of John Henry, a renegade Irishman and double traitor, who came to Boston in 1808 and 1809 to report on the situation to the governor of Canada. He writes his employer on March 5, 1809, that in case war was declared against Great Britain the legislature of Massachusetts, in his judgment, will "give the tone to the neighboring States, will declare itself permanent until a new election of members, invite a Congress to be composed of delegates from the Federal States, and erect a separate government for the common defense and common interests." This testimony is not of great value. Henry brought good letters of introduction, and mingled freely in Boston society; but, as he did not disclose the nature of his profession, he could not have gained admission to the deliberations of the Essex Junto, even had the gentlemen of that persuasion been willing

[11] W. W. Story, *Life of Joseph Story*, I, 191; Plumer, *Life of William Plumer*, 368–69; E. Quincy, *J. Quincy*, 189; H. Adams, *Gallatin*, 384; *N. E. Federalism*, 380. In the autumn elections of 1808 many of the Democratic papers in New England ceased to defend the embargo, and appealed for support on the ground that a vote for the Federal party was a vote for a New England Confederacy under British protection.

[12] M. Carey, *Olive Branch*, chap. XXVI.

[13] "The policy of separation is indeed avowed in some quarters with a sort of ostentation, which indicates rather an expectation that it will produce its effect as a menace, than a deliberate purpose for execution. They, who use it in this view, have not yet learnt the necessary political lesson, never to threaten where you do not intend to strike." Adams to Nahum Parker, December 5, 1808. Adams MSS.

to join forces with the British government. His conclusion in regard to the proposed convention was probably based on convivial after-dinner anathemas, if, indeed, it had any foundation.[14]

Otis's letter distinctly states that in no case must the Federalists "justify the obloquy of wishing to promote a Separation of the States," and that the "mode of relief" to be provided by the Hartford Convention must "not be *inconsistent with the Union of these States.*"[15] In 1828 he denied categorically that he had so much as heard of a Northern Confederacy plot in 1808, or at any other time. In reply John Quincy Adams said that Otis, if not privy to a secession conspiracy, was the dupe of the conspirators.[16] To sustain this argument, it is necessary to show that Timothy Pickering, who, it may safely be assumed, was at the head of any disunion plot that may have existed, still entertained his schemes of 1804. There is no evidence that he did. Timothy Pickering, to be sure, was absolutely unscrupulous in the means he used to attain his ends. During the spring and summer of 1808, in a correspondence with George Rose, a recent British minister to the United States, he requested the British government to be patient and abstain from war, in order to let the embargo have its effect on the presidential election. But neither in those letters nor in any of his correspondence does Pickering mention or hint at disunion. If such

[14] Henry's letters (*Annals of Cong.*, 12th Cong., appendix); T. C. Amory, *James Sullivan*, II, 292; E. Quincy, *J. Quincy*, 250; William Sullivan, *Public Men*, 330.

[15] Henry Adams remarks on this phrase (*United States*, IV, 404), "American constitutional lawyers never wholly succeeded in devising any form of secession which might not coexist with some conceivable form of Union." The secessionists of 1860–61 claimed that secession was constitutional, but they never claimed that this form of "relief," when once applied, was consistent with union — that a seceded state or states could be part of the union from which it separated.

[16] *N. E. Federalism*, 77, 230, 238.

were his aim, he had no more reason to conceal it then from his associates of the Essex Junto than he had had in 1804. His letters of that year teem with "separation," "disunion," "Northern Confederacy," etc. There exists, then, no ground for the assumption that Pickering was plotting disunion in 1808. He and Otis desired a New England convention, as it seemed the most effective method of securing the coöperation of all New England in nullifying the embargo, and a united demand for such constitutional amendments as would prevent future embargoes.[17]

From the passage of the Force Act on, the people of New England followed Pickering's lead in their primary assemblies. In a Boston town meeting of January 24, after an exciting debate between Otis and Dexter on one side, and Dr. Eustis and George Blake on the other, a petition was drawn up, not to Congress, — for all hope of relief from that quarter was gone, — but to the Great and General Court of Massachusetts. The petition starts from the premise "That the provision of the Constitution of the United States which declares, that all powers, not expressly delegated to them, are reserved to the respective States, or to the People, we conceive to be *a fundamental principle of the confederation*," and ends with a spirited appeal for "means of relief against unconstitutional measures of the General Government." A set of vigorous resolutions, in which "all those who shall assist in enforcing on others the arbitrary & unconstitutional provisions of this act," are denounced as "enemies to the Constitution of the United States and of this State, and hostile to the Liberties of the People," were then adopted.[18]

[17] The Essex Resolutions of October 6, 1808, demand such amendments to the Constitution "as to secure the nation from such evils in future. . . . We shall never be contented until we are secured from a repetition of the same evils." Cf. below, p. 12; Salem *Gazette*, October 14, 1808.

[18] *Boston Town Records, 1796–1813*, 241–45.

On the following day, January 25, the General Court convened for its winter session, and at once commenced an attack on the Embargo and Force Acts that was afterwards dignified by the title of "Patriotick Proceedings." [19] The tone of these proceedings was, in fact, much more moderate and patriotic than that of the town resolutions that were being passed at the time. The leaders, it seems, realized the necessity of tempering the zeal of the people's representatives, in order to prevent an actual clash of arms, and in order, as Otis said in his letter of December 21, to avoid the imputation of secession.[20] The "Patriotick Proceedings" were, however, sufficiently alarming to that stanch old Democrat, Mercy Warren, to bring forth a query to her nephew Otis as to "what he was about." Otis answered her somewhat flippantly,[21] but his father assured her son, Henry Warren, that

> The President of your Senate . . . writes but little on political subjects; Enough however, to convince me that, altho he ardently wishes to guard against unconstitutional and oppressive restrictions, he as ardently wishes to prevent things going to extremities and confusion. For indeed he hath many valuable articles afloat, "on the tempestuous sea of liberty." [22]

Otis was a conspicuous leader in the "Patriotick Proceedings." His hand is evident in a masterly and truculent reply of the Senate to the lieutenant-governor's opening speech,[23] in which the Federal party was accused of disunion proclivities, and unquestioning obedience to the national administration was demanded. The mode

[19] The title of a pamphlet (Boston, 1809) in which the principal measures of the session are recorded.

[20] *King*, v, 112.

[21] The letter follows this chapter.

[22] February 5, 1809, *Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc.*, XLV, 482.

[23] James Sullivan died December 10, 1808, and Levi Lincoln, a far more ardent Democrat, was acting governor.

in which the lieutenant-governor expressed himself gave the Federal party an opportunity to pose as the champion of free speech and popular rights. In the speeches and resolutions that followed, sectional appeals were frequently made, British ground frankly taken, and the Embargo and Force Acts denounced again and again as unconstitutional. The right of the state legislature to nullify them was freely asserted in terms scarcely differing from Calhoun's "Exposition" of 1828; but nothing was done to carry nullification into effect. The two principal measures of the session, a "Memorial and Remonstrance" to Congress, and an "Address of the Legislature to the People of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts," were, in comparison to the documents of later state rights movements, moderate in tone, and, so far as the language addressed to Congress was concerned, persuasive rather than threatening.

The "Patriotick Proceedings" reach a climax in three resolutions of February 15, 1809. The first of these declares that the Force Act "is, in the opinion of the legislature, in many respects, unjust, oppressive, and unconstitutional, and not legally binding on the citizens of this state." The people, however, are advised "to abstain from forcible resistance, and to apply for their remedy in a peaceable manner to the laws of the Commonwealth." It is further

> *Resolved*, That the legislature of this commonwealth will zealously co-operate with any of the other states, in all legal and constitutional measures, for procuring such amendments to the constitution of the United States, as shall be judged necessary to obtain protection and defence for commerce, and to give to the commercial states their fair and just consideration in the government of the Union; and for affording permanent security, as well as present relief, from the oppressive measures under which they now suffer.

Resolved, that the honourable the president of the Senate and the honourable the speaker of the House of Representatives, be requested to transmit a copy of this report, and the resolutions thereon, to the legislatures of such of our sister states, as manifest a disposition to concur with us in measures to rescue our common country from impending ruin, and to preserve inviolate the union of the states.[24]

We shall later find, conspicuous among the Federalist demands of 1814, the same constitutional amendments suggested in these resolutions of 1809. Their language becomes even more significant if we compare it with Otis's letter of December 15, 1808, to Josiah Quincy. In that document Otis had expressed his conviction that a New England Convention must be summoned on the initiative of some other state than Massachusetts, if at all. Were not these resolves of February 15, 1809, intended to convey the hint that Massachusetts would respond favorably to such a call? If so, their object failed. The legislative proceedings in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Delaware were fully up to the tone of those in Massachusetts,[25] yet no steps seem to have been taken to call a New England convention. Otis and Bigelow, as President of the Senate and Speaker of the House, transmitted copies of the "Patriotick Proceedings" to the governors of Rhode Island and Connecticut, but received in reply only perfunctory acknowledgments of their receipt.[26]

By February 1, 1809, the embargo was doomed, quite apart from anything said or done by the legislatures of the Federalist states. The Northern Democrats in Congress had allied themselves with the Federalists to force its repeal. Jefferson pleaded in vain for the continuance of his system: on February 3 a test vote in the House of Representatives indicated a majority of 23 against

[24] *Patriotick Proceedings*, 52.

[25] Ames, *State Docs.*, no. II, 36–44.

[26] *Centinel*, July 4, 1812.

him. His veto might yet have blocked a repeal, but the voice of New England expressed in the primary assemblies forced him to submit. All through January memorials from Massachusetts towns, procured in all probability through the efforts of the Federalist party machine,[27] came pouring in on Jefferson. Their language was extreme: the immediate repeal of the embargo and a reversal of the administration's foreign policy were imperatively demanded, and accompanied in many instances by threats of forcible resistance and even secession.[28] "I felt the foundation of the government shaken under my feet by the New England townships," Jefferson afterwards wrote. On March 1, 1809, he signed an act repealing the embargo, and three days after this enforced act of humiliation, his reign came to an end.

The cost of his experiment, as Henry Adams has said, "exceeded all calculation. Financially, it emptied the Treasury, bankrupted the mercantile and agricultural class, and ground the poor beyond endurance. Constitutionally, it overrode every specified limit on arbitrary power and made Congress despotic, while it left no bounds to the authority which might be vested by Congress in the President. Morally, it sapped the nation's vital force, lowering its courage, paralyzing its energy, corrupting its principles, and arraying all the active elements of society in factious opposition to government or

[27] The Committees of Correspondence, which are frequently mentioned as being formed in New England towns during the embargo (e.g., by John Henry the spy, Adams, *United States*, IV, 247), were simply the Federalist town committees, which probably called the protestant town meetings in obedience to orders from the Central Committee in Boston. The language of the petitions, however, is too dissimilar to warrant the assumption that the Central Committee also furnished a model set of resolutions. Did not Jefferson refer to the Federalist machine, and not to the town meetings, when he wrote, "The organization of this little selfish minority enabled it to overrule the Union"?

[28] H. Adams, *United States*, IV, 413–15, chap. XIX; *Olive Branch*, chap. XXVI.

in secret paths of treason. Politically, it cost Jefferson the fruits of eight years' painful labor for popularity, and brought the Union to the edge of a precipice."[29] It taught the New England people that their interests were not safe in Democratic hands, and forced the Federal party, in defense of the sectional interests that it represented, to abandon its ancient and enduring principles in favor of state rights. Henceforth, until the world peace of 1815, the Federal party in Massachusetts was anti-federal and anti-national, gaining its ends by methods, sheltering itself under theories that were finally used to justify secession from the Union.

LETTER

OTIS TO MERCY WARREN

From the Warren Manuscripts

BOSTON, 4 feby 1809.

My dear Aunt,

If I could allow the right of any person to interrogate me as to "what I am about," you may well suppose that there is no individual of your political party, whom I would prefer for a confessor to your much respected self. But it certainly must occur to you that if I have really turned conspirator against the State, I ought not to put it even in your power to hang me; nor even to write a letter which under the present arbitrary government, might by a forced construction, if found by accident, be construed into evidence of treason. Your enquiry therefore if it extends to my secret machinations, you must permit me to decline, and if it applies only to my overt acts, it is superfluous, as they will appear on record in the public and political bodies with which I am associated.

To be serious, my dear Aunt, my respect and affection for you, are so utterly at variance with the political views & party attachments which to my great sorrow & mortification, you

[29] H. Adams, *United States*, IV, 288.

have been led to embrace; that I have for twenty years, studiously evaded all discussions of the last, lest the former might be brought into jeopardy. And from this determination I cannot consent to be diverted, at this late period of your existence, when my duty and your afflictions equally require, that all the sentiments which I have an opportunity to express to you, should breath nothing but tenderness consolation & respectful love. To mingle with these the acidulating, corrosive ingredients of political creeds, would be to turn the milk of human kindness into poison. I will not engage in such a process. I will not disturb the vale which is consecrated to repose, & bedewed with sorrow, by the noisy echos of party disputes. I will not agitate the groves of cypress and weeping willows by the noise and bustle of excited passions. When I enter these retirements I will put off my shoes. When I write to them my letters shall not be bearers of the "fierce debate and tart reply," but so far as depends on me, they shall be the messengers of affection and of peace.

It was my firm intention to have made you a visit soon after the death of my uncle, but I have been constantly overwhelmed with the concerns of others from which I have not been at liberty to escape. Whether I live in vain or even worse than in vain, I can truly say, I have not yet had a chance of living much for myself, nor for the pleasures and advantages of sweet communion with any particular connections. I sometimes am so sanguine as to hope that these blessings are not forever alienated from me even in this world, but the hours fly, and my white hairs become daily more discernible.

My family all unite with me, in the sincere assur[ances] of regard and duty to you and yours, with w[hich] I am dear Madam

Yr dutiful Nephew
H G Otis.

CHAPTER XIX

FEDERALIST TACTICS UNDER MADISON AND GERRY

1809–1811, ÆT. 44–46

THE simultaneous retirement of Jefferson and the embargo brought another short breathing space in American politics — the last until the universal peace of 1815. Congress replaced the embargo by an act of non-intercourse with Great Britain and France, but this new law did not prohibit the supplying of provisions to the British armies in the Iberian Peninsula, a trade that proved to be exceedingly profitable. In April came another event that completely reconciled New England with the newly installed administration of Madison. This was the so-called Erskine Agreement of April 19, 1809, in which the British minister at Washington promised, on behalf of his government, to revoke the offensive Orders in Council, if the United States would repeal the Non-Intercourse Act against Great Britain, and maintain it against France. Madison and Congress at once carried out their side of the agreement, whereupon the United States resumed direct trade with Great Britain, and the Federalist press showered praises upon the President. No grievance was left for the Federal party to maintain, and a new and brighter era apparently had opened in politics and commerce.

But the United States had reckoned without George Canning, the dictator of England's foreign policy. When it reached England (May 22), Erskine's agreement was approved on every side, but in two days' time it was repu-

diated by Canning in the most summary fashion. Had he accepted the arrangement, Canning would have anticipated Napoleon in securing the friendship of Madison's administration; his rejection made inevitable the war that came in 1812.

Every disputed question between the two countries was now thrown into the melting-pot. Canning made a settlement impossible by appointing, as minister to the United States, Francis James Jackson, his favorite instrument for coercing weak neutrals into a British alliance. It was Jackson who in 1807 had offered the Prince Royal of Denmark the choice of handing over his fleet to England or having his capital bombarded.

The new minister, a tall, well-formed Briton, arrogant and contemptuous of the peace-loving government to which he was accredited, went out to America immediately, and the same year commenced his negotiations. His instructions from Canning began with an insulting accusation; a statement that the American government "must have known" that Erskine was violating his instructions in concluding the agreement of April 19. When Jackson put forward this view in a diplomatic note, the President replied, on November 8, 1809, that no further communications would be received from him. The Non-Intercourse Act was renewed against Great Britain, and relations with that country returned to their normal condition of semi-hostility.

The Federal party now took its cue from the diplomatic notes of George Canning and Francis James Jackson. "Robert Smith [the Secretary of State] persuaded that weak young man Erskine to violate his instructions," wrote one of Pickering's correspondents.[1] The minority in Congress, the Federalist press, and a host of pam-

[1] Benjamin Stoddert, December 6, 1809. Pickering MSS., XXIX, 185.

phleteers frankly took this ground, denounced the Erskine Agreement as unfair to England, and accused the administration of dismissing Jackson in order to prolong the difficulties with England. Otis, still President of the Massachusetts Senate, voted for resolutions expressing this view, and even attempted to procure concurrent resolutions from other Federalist states.[2] Jackson himself wrote of Massachusetts, "That State . . . has done more towards justifying me to the world than it was possible, from the nature of things, that I or any other person could do."[3]

This unpatriotic attitude of the Federal party, in contrast to its action at the time of the *Chesapeake* affair, was another unfortunate result of Jefferson's embargo and of Timothy Pickering's teachings. Federalism now put greater trust in a foreign government than in the administration at Washington. It had become British, in the same sense that Jeffersonian Democracy had been French during the last decade of the eighteenth century; and just as the Democrats at that time maintained cordial relations with a French minister who insulted Washington, so in 1810 the Federalists flattered the British minister who insulted Madison. Pickering at once opened a correspondence with Jackson, and received with delight his disparaging remarks on Madison's administration. "All is well," Jackson writes him on March 5, 1810. "I have received the most satisfactory accounts from England where I know you will be glad to hear my conduct has been loudly and generally approved." A rumor, however, reached the Republican press that Jackson had been discredited at London — "I wonder that no member

[2] *Resolves of General Court*, February 8, 1810; *Report, etc., of the Committee of both Houses* (no t. p., Boston, 1810). Cf. letter of Grosvenor and Van Vechten following this chapter.

[3] Sir G. Jackson, *Letters* ("Bath Archives," 2d series, London, 1873), I, 83.

of Congress clears up this point," he had the effrontery to write. "I am already justified by America, judge then if my own country will find fault with me!" [4]

After his dismissal from Washington, Francis James Jackson made a triumphal tour to the northward, receiving flattering attentions from Federalists in every city on the way. His reception in Boston was made the occasion of a pro-British demonstration. Governor Gore was to have been his host, but, fortunately for the good name of Massachusetts, Elbridge Gerry of Madison's party had succeeded him by this time, so that Jackson's reception could not be official. Otis and his friends, however, made up in warmth what was lacking in official sanction. The first function Jackson attended in Boston was that time-honored ceremony, the annual election and dinner of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, on June 4, 1810. He joined the procession leisurely, after keeping it waiting for him some time at the Old South Church, swaggered into Faneuil Hall, where the dinner was held, and without taking the slightest notice of Governor Gerry, seated himself at the same table with him. The governor in fact had requested, but too late, that Jackson should not be invited to the dinner. On being called upon for a toast, Jackson had the sublime impudence to offer the following:

> Perpetual harmony between Great Britain and the United States — May the swords of this Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company be drawn against those who would interrupt it!

As might be expected, this sentiment created a sensation, which Harrison Gray Otis only partially effaced by his gracious and non-committal response:

[4] Pickering MSS., XLIII, 281, 285, 291, 304.

May our prejudices against the British Nation, like those against her minister, vanish upon a more intimate acquaintance.[5]

Jackson wrote his family that he was duly flattered at the dinner, in spite of the governor's coldness, since "the clergy, the magistrates, the heads of the University of Cambridge, and the military, came to the top of the room in their respective bodies to be introduced to and to compliment me. There is at Washington, in consequence, 'much wailing and gnashing of teeth.'"[6] He highly approved of a "superb public dinner" tendered him by the Federalists in the Exchange Coffee-House, "at which," he wrote, "near three hundred persons were present, and where we had cheering and singing in the best style of Bishopsgate Street or Merchant Taylor's Hall." Jackson offered the toast:

Commerce without restrictions — Liberty without licentiousness — Patriotism without fear.

Senator Pickering was then called upon for a sentiment. Boldly he flung out a challenge to Madison and Napoleon:

The World's last hope — Britain's fast-anchored Isle!

These words, which summarized the Federalist platform from 1809 to 1815, were fittingly greeted by the company with a roar of approval. Pickering afterwards exclaimed, "I am willing the sentiment should be inscribed on my tombstone!"[7]

Jackson found that Boston hospitality came up to its British reputation. He lived "nine days in clover at

[5] Boston newspapers of June, 1810.

[6] Sir G. Jackson, *Letters*, I, 151.

[7] Boston papers of June, 1810; *Life of Pickering*, IV, 172; W. Burdick, *Mass. Manual*, 164.

about eighteen of the principal houses, never having less than two engagements a day." One of the houses was evidently that of Harrison Gray Otis, for a week after leaving Boston, Jackson wrote him a letter, which is a good example of the sort of language that Federalist leaders permitted and even encouraged from a dismissed minister who had insulted their government.[8] Although he hoped the British government would insist on Madison receiving him again, Jackson was soon recalled, not, however, until he had made a journey to Niagara Falls, and recorded among his observations of the strange and curious, the fact that "It is a very general and favorite article of belief with those few amongst the Americans who look beyond the events of the day, that their country is destined, at no very distant period, to take a conspicuous and 'influential' part in the affairs of the world."[9]

No Federalist President could have done more than Madison to secure the good will of the British government. Since Canning's stubbornness had blocked his attempt, he now quite naturally sought an opening in France, where Napoleon met him with a Machiavellian change of policy which so completely outwitted and deceived him as to give color to the Federalist charge of French influence. By ceasing to intimidate, and affecting to relax his continental system as Madison desired, Napoleon hoped to trick the United States into hostility with England. Accordingly his foreign minister, the Duc de Cadore, informed the American minister at Paris, on August 5, 1810, that His Majesty "loves the Americans,"

[8] See end of this chapter.

[9] Sir G. Jackson, *Letters*, I, 155. Down to the War of 1812, Jackson was one of the channels through which Timothy Pickering encouraged the British Government to maintain its pretensions against the United States.

and that the Berlin and Milan Decrees would cease to have effect after November 1, *bien entendu que* Great Britain would revoke her orders, or that the United States would "cause their rights to be respected by the English." Madison swallowed the bait, took the letter as a definite revocation of the Decrees — which it was never intended to be — issued a proclamation that France had relaxed her continental system, and announced that intercourse with Great Britain would again be suspended on February 2, 1811.[10] Congress provided the necessary legislation; and New England again took the path of nullification. To New England Federalism, the new non-intercourse act seemed a clear case of French influence and hostility to commercial interests. All the world knew that Napoleon's Decrees were still in force. On the very day that Cadore announced His Majesty's love for the Americans, every American vessel in French ports was condemned without process of law by a new and secret decree. Every ship from Europe brought news of additional French spoliations, and of cruelties to American sailors in French dungeons. Madison knew these facts in part, and commented upon them in a message to Congress of January 31, 1811; yet Congress persisted in passing the Non-Intercourse Act against Great Britain on the ground that the "national faith was pledged to France," that Cadore's slippery letter of August 5 carried a contract, which the United States was in honor bound to fulfill. As Henry Adams has said, "If they wished to exasperate the conscience of New England . . . to fanatical violence, they came nearest their end by insisting on an involuntary, one-sided compact, intended to force

[10] E. Channing, *Jeffersonian System*, 249. Full intercourse, with both belligerents, had been restored by "Macon's bill, No. 2" of May 1, 1810, which provided that when one power relaxed its anti-neutral system, non-intercourse would be restored against the other by order of the President.

Massachusetts and Connecticut to do the will of the man whom a majority of the people in New England seriously regarded as anti-Christ." [11]

Boston Federalism, already stirred up over the admission of Louisiana to the Union, an act which Quincy stated in Congress to be a good cause for secession, expressed its opinion of Madison's new policy in the Grand Caucus at Faneuil Hall, on March 31, 1811. After the usual routine business had been transacted, John Lowell, the mouthpiece of the Essex Junto, presented a series of resolutions. The preamble drew a significant parallel between the grievances of Boston in 1775 and in 1811, and the last paragraph practically adopted a platform of nullification and resistance for the Boston Federal party:

> Resolved, that such an unjust, oppressive, and tyrannical act they consider the [non-intercourse] statute passed by congress on 2d March inst. tending to the ruin or impoverishment of some of the most industrious and meritorious citizens of the United States, and that the only means short of an appeal to force, (which heaven avert) is the election of such men to the various offices in the state government as will oppose by peaceable but firm measures the execution of laws, which if persisted in must and will be resisted.

Harrison Gray Otis, "after a short panegyric of the measure proposed, seconded the motion of his honorable friend," and in the debate that followed,

> with his usual eloquence, brought home to our feelings the disastrous state of our public affairs. He proved that the plans of the present administration are in perfect conformity with those of NAPOLEON and that the Continental System which NAPOLEON has established through *Europe* is now in operation on our own merchants at home.[12]

[11] H. Adams, *United States*, v. 344.

[12] *Centinel*, April, 3, 1811; J. T. Austin, *Life of Gerry*, II, 331.

In these words Otis showed that he possessed considerable insight into Napoleonic diplomacy. Madison's Non-Intercourse Act was, in fact, a corollary to Napoleon's continental system, which it brought to its highest point of efficiency. But Otis's support of Lowell's motion could only be taken as a public confession of faith in the Essex Junto's doctrine of nullification. The expression of surprise from Democratic critics at finding Harrison Gray Otis supporting such proceedings, indicates that his position as a leader outside the Essex Junto was well understood. "Leolin" (the pseudonym of James Trecothick Austin, Elbridge Gerry's son-in-law and biographer) addressed a series of letters to Otis in the Boston *Patriot*,[13] in which he deplored that "that splendid eloquence, which always animates and charms — which on every subject is equally ready and brilliant," should be raised in support of resistance to the laws. Otis was also the subject of several lines in an amusing Hudibrastic poem on the meeting, by "Tristram Trap'em Esq.":

> We now shall say a word or two
> Of Harry O. Ben P. and Q.[14]
> The *first* with tongue as smooth as oil,
> Address'd the gaping crowd awhile;
> Told a long train of sad disasters,
> (No doubt to please his tory masters)
> Which never came into existence;
> And closed with threats of stout resistance.
> Alas! poor Harry, where are now
> The honors which once on thy brow
> Began to bud? — O fie! for shame!
> That thou shouldst tarnish the bright name
> Of ——, and become the tool
> Of every factious, meddling fool!

[13] April and May, 1811. Republished in a pamphlet, *Resistance to Laws of the United States, considered in four letters to Hon. H. G. Otis, by Leolin.* Boston, 1811.

[14] Otis, Benjamin Pollard, and Josiah Quincy, the orators of the caucus.

Believe me, friend, you ne'er will share
The honors of the Gov'nor's chair;
No doubt but still the tory party
Will stuff your ears with praises hearty —
But all that you can hope to be,
Is a mere *imp of drudgery!*[15]

These last six lines went straight to the mark, for Otis had not yet received the Federalist nomination for governor, in spite of his long public career and his continual "drudgery" on the hard-worked Central Committee.

The tone of the Federalist press of Boston during April, 1811, left no doubt that the party intended to nullify the Non-Intercourse Act, if returned to power, or to resist its enforcement, if defeated. But, since the economic effects of this act were mild compared with those of the embargo, the people very properly rebuked Federalist extremism by giving the Democratic ticket a clean sweep. Elbridge Gerry was reëlected, and secured a majority in both houses of the legislature. In 1810 the lower house had been Democratic, but the Senate equally divided, and Otis, by his casting vote as its President, had blocked every measure of Democratic "reform." This year the tables were turned, Otis was deposed from the presidency, and the way was clear for Democratic legislation.

In his speech at the opening session of the General Court, on June 7, 1811, Governor Gerry, castigating the Boston meeting of March 31 and its leaders, imputed to them with some justice such conduct "as would beguile peaceable and happy citizens into a state of civil warfare."[16] The Senate drew up a suitable reply, from which Otis proposed to strike out "all that part of the answer which was a mere echo of the Governor's denunciation of

[15] *The Boston Assemblage, or a peep at Caucus Hall, most respectfully inscribed to the 'Boston Rebel'* [John Lowell]. *By Tristram Trap'em Esq.* Boston, 1812.

[16] *Centinel*, June 8, 1811.

the 'assemblage' of Bostonians," and proposed a set of spirited amendments, such as:

> We are unable to discern any power in the Constitution which gives the authority . . . to the chief magistrate of denouncing any peaceable assembly of citizens. . . . We are sensible that this species of invective was a familiar expedient with some royal governors, the use of which compelled some of them to exile themselves and to spend the residue of their mournful days in foreign climes.

These amendments were rejected, of course, by the majority; but not without giving Otis an opportunity to deliver a memorable oration (unfortunately not preserved) on the right of free speech and the duty of resistance to oppressive laws.[17]

Having secured the executive department and both branches of the legislature, the Massachusetts Democracy pushed through a series of "reforms," the chief objects of which were to capture patronage, and to entrench itself in power. The famous Gerrymander was the most typical, but not the most important instance of this legislation. Since the judges were unassailable on account of their life tenure, the legislature abolished all courts but the Supreme Court, and created new ones to which Republicans were appointed. The appointment of clerks of courts was taken out of the judges' hands, and placed in those of the governor, and the judicial reforms of 1803 and 1808, which Otis had been instrumental in procuring, were swept away. Even the sacred clergy, the "College at Cambridge," and the banks were tampered with. Governor Gerry began his administration with high ideals, but was too weak to resist the unprincipled office-seeking class in his party. He furthermore lost

[17] Commented upon by the *Centinel*, June 19, 1811, and the 4th number of Leolin's *Resistance to Laws*.

much of his popularity by showing the same sensitiveness to criticism that characterized the Federalists in 1798, and by solemnly communicating to the General Court in a special message a letter that threatened his assassination. Otis, now the minority leader, passed the pleasantest sessions of his legislative career in watching the "Jacobins" thus rushing to their own destruction. He hastened the process considerably by turning on the dominant party and its unfortunate chief all his fund of humor and sarcasm.

The Massachusetts Democracy in this session lost a splendid opportunity to secure a permanent hold on the state. Its reckless spirit of proscription and destruction effectually proved the Federalist charge that the Democratic leaders were an unprincipled set of office-seekers, unfit to govern a conservative state like Massachusetts. In the spring of 1812, the Federal party wisely discarded Christopher Gore as nominee for governor, and under the lead of its old standard-bearer, Caleb Strong, recovered power on the eve of war. Not until 1823 did the people of Massachusetts again venture to entrust their government to a party bearing the stamp of Jeffersonian Democracy.

LETTERS

THOMAS P. GROSVENOR AND ABRAHAM VAN VECHTEN[18] TO OTIS

[Albany, February, 1810]

Harrison G Otis Esq
sir

We have conferred with Major Edwards[19] upon the subject of Cooperating resolutions to be passed by our house of Assembly & your Legislature. Major Edwards' short stay here precludes the possibility of entering into any decisive arrangement. It is extremely difficult, so recently has our Legislature convened to ascertain precisely the course we shall be induced to adopt. By the Answer given by the house to the Governor which Major Edwards will show you & which has been sanctioned & will pass by the vote of every Federalist in the assembly, you will perceive that we take a pretty lofty & decisive position. From that position we shall, at worst, not recede. — And we think that we shall be able to advance on the enemy.

It is of course impossible to state to you what our resolutions will be in detail. We have so many difficulties to encounter, so many minds to satisfy, and so many conflicting interests to reconcile that we cannot, with any safety, send you copies of any formal resolutions.

In the General however we can state, that those resolutions will contain firm and distinct, federal opinions upon all the prominent measures of the Administration. The Outline, in short, which in your letter to Major Edwards you have given of your intended Resolutions, we shall fill up, in a manner & tone that will & must convince the federal Government that we are in Earnest. We think that such a voice from a quarter, whence

[18] Van Vechten was Federalist leader in the New York assembly, and Grosvenor a prominent member from Columbia County. This letter, though undated, was found with the Otis MSS. for 1810, and undoubtedly refers to an attempt of Otis to procure resolutions from the New York and Connecticut assemblies, concurring with those of Massachusetts of February 8, 1810, on the dismissal of F. J. Jackson.

[19] Probably William Edwards, a member of a leading Connecticut Valley family, and prominent in Hampshire County politics.

they have heretofore heard nothing but notes of adulation will sound ominous to them.

We cannot promise to go so far as your Legislature is prepared to go. Because, as yet, we cannot answer for all our party in the Assembly. But this we can engage that we will take firm and decissive Ground upon the points you have mentioned; and we think if it should become necessary, our house of Assembly would not shrink from any resolution Disapprobating every recent operation of the General Government relative to our foreign affairs.

These resolutions will probably be offered to the house about the 19th or 20th of this month. For any further particulars we refer you to Major Edwards. We shall be glad to have Copies of your resolutions as early as possible — And any other information you may deem proper — And we are sir

Your Obedt Humble servts

THOMAS P GROSVENOR
AB. VAN VECHTEN

FRANCIS JAMES JACKSON TO OTIS

Claremont[20] 18 June 1810

Dear Sir —

I was taught to believe that I should see you at or after the Dinner on Monday at the Exchange Coffee House, or I would have called upon you that Evening were it only to say Adieu, & how much I was gratified by the Manner in which the Day had passed. You were engaged early the next morning & so was I — most agreably, amongst other things, in receiving a Visit from a very distinguished member of your Community Judge Parsons, whose Conversation, altho' necessarily short, was both interesting and instructive, & it has a place on my Tablets accordingly.

You will have learned either from Col. Pickering or Mr. Cabot the purport of the Communication which I recd. on Sunday, they would have formed a part of our *Parlance* had I had the Good Fortune to see you afterwards, & would have afforded you additional Proof of the Deception practised by

[20] A country place that Jackson had hired, on the Hudson River, near New York.

those who think no Means ill employed that may tend to keep up the Irritation between this Country and Great Britain. The last Extra-Intelligencer will have shown you the State of your Relations with France — it is now said that no new Minister will come from that Country, and you may be assured that notwithstanding the Attempt to keep Genl. Armstrong there, to which he appears to lend a willing Ear, when he does come he will bring only the account of some fresh Outrage. Whatever Truth & Force there may be in his Notes to M. Cadore, they are not calculated *alone* to obtain Justice, & least of all thro' his channel. Never was more Weakness displayed than in this Minister's Correspondence and that of his Colleague Mr. Pinkney on the subject of the Orders in Council of the 16th May 1806, I mean as regards their Government & the Views entertained by it in authorizing such a Correspondence.

The Tilsit is shortly expected at Baltimore with another Cargo of Emissaries for South America; where you see that the work of Revolution has begun; and where unless speedy Measures and Repressions are adopted, there will be scenes similar to those heretofore acted in St Domingo. If we are not quick the French will be before hand with us, and having once got a footing on the Continent, they will know how to improve it.

We have inquired tho' hitherto in vain, for Mr. & Mrs. Lyman; as they are probably about this time in our Neighborhood, we are not without hopes of seeing them call in.

Mrs. Jackson desires to be kindly remembered to Mrs. Otis. I beg you to offer her my sincere respects, & to believe me, Dear Sir,

Your very faithful and obedt Servant

F. J. Jackson.

CHAPTER XX

THE EVE OF WAR

1811–1812, ÆT. 46–47

In 1811 events began distinctly to move toward war. In the face of continued captures and confiscations of American vessels by the French, the British government, very reasonably refusing to take Madison's word that Napoleon had revoked the Berlin and Milan Decrees, expressed its determination to maintain the Orders in Council, with the result that in March, 1811, the American minister in London took leave of the Foreign Office. An accidental sea fight occurred in May between an American frigate and an English corvette. But most ominous for the peace of the two countries was the appearance in the Twelfth Congress, that convened on November 4, 1811, of a formidable group of young Southerners and Westerners, who had been elected on a war platform. Henry Clay of Kentucky, John C. Calhoun and William Lowndes of South Carolina, and Felix P. Grundy of Tennessee, were typical members of this group. Josiah Quincy described them as "Young politicians, half hatched, the shell still on their heads, and their pin feathers not yet shed," but they were no younger than Otis, Harper, Rutledge, and Bayard had been, when leading the Fifth Congress. These men, moreover, represented the rising West and Southwest, sections which had no faith in the Jeffersonian system of commercial restriction, and resented the contempt with which it was regarded by the belligerents of Europe. The West de-

manded war; and that war must be, in accordance with its sectional interests and prejudices, against Great Britain. Every Westerner believed that the British government was instigating the Indians to resist the advance of the white settlers. The only way to end this state of affairs, it was thought, was to conquer Canada. Thus England's opportunity to tamper with the savages would be destroyed, and a new field would be opened to American expansion.[1]

The "war-hawks," as the exponents of this project were called, gained the balance of power among the various Republican factions in Congress, and chose Henry Clay as Speaker. In the face of this new state of affairs, the Federalists were led by Josiah Quincy to adopt an extraordinary policy. Quincy, now leader of the Federalist minority in the House of Representatives, utterly failed to perceive the rising war spirit. Still believing, as he stated in his famous speech of 1809, that the Republican majority "could not be kicked" into hostilities, he wished the Federal party to call loudly for war with Great Britain, simply to gain popularity and get rid of the restrictive system. According to Christopher Gore, Quincy and Otis "hatched" the plan in Boston before Congress met.[2] It was further developed in two long letters from Quincy to Otis, written from Washington after the winter session had begun. The following extract from one of them (November 26, 1811), shows his opinion of the war-hawks' sincerity:

> Some of their partizans threaten high ground — war — seizure of the Canada, and *id genus omne*. It is ludicrous to hear men talk in this manner, when it has been the burden of

[1] K. C. Babcock, *Rise of American Nationality*, chap. IV; H. Adams, *United States*, VI, chap. VI.

[2] *King*, V, 282.

their successive song, for six years past, and all have eventuated, uniformly, in the same self-denying ordinances and the same utter imbecillity in all effective preparations either for offence or defence. . . . They cry "war" in public. In secret they say "we cannot undertake it." Clay our Speaker told me yesterday with some *naïveté*, "the truth is I am in favour of war and so are some others — *but some of us fear that if we get into war you will get our places.*"

Quincy then beseeches his friends to abandon "British ground," and exposes the tactical error of constantly taking the part of the British government against their own:

Why will not Federal men adopt a course more true to themselves, more just, as it respects the character of their opponents, more faithful to those interests, which, as New England men they are particularly bound to cherish and defend? Instead of suffering themselves to believe and inculcating the belief in others, that the design of administration is a British war; let them understand, and let them make it apparent to the people, that their real design is to embarrass commerce and annihilate its influence, as a part of a system, which has for its objects, the present advancement of their personal views and the permanent elevation of the interests of the planting States over the commercial. Let them go further. Let them set themselves about convincing the people of our section of the country that the present situation of the commercial part of the country *is worse than any war, even a British*, and that if administration mean to force us to take the one, or the other, that although they cannot justify the principle of such war, yet that in its political effects, foreign war in any supposable calamity is preferable to the evils we now feel and may fairly anticipate.

Quincy expected the administration to send a "solemn mission" to England as an excuse for prolonging the restrictive policy over the presidential election, and after that to continue it indefinitely, in order "to prostrate the commercial interests." He further developed the idea,

startling to Federalists, that war with Great Britain would not be so bad after all. England could not hurt us essentially, and the war would be so incompetently managed, that the people would turn the war-hawks out, and, as Clay had remarked jestingly, give the Federalists their places. In consequence, Quincy announced his intention to support all war preparations of the administration, and even urged that they be made more effective. This course he consistently pursued, and carried many of the Federalists in Congress with him.[3] So infatuated did Quincy and his followers become with their new policy, that two of them made the treasonable suggestion to the British minister in Washington that his government should maintain the full rigor of its anti-neutral system, and force a war on the United States.[4]

This Machiavellian plan of Quincy was undoubtedly clever. Had the Federalists only brought themselves to support a war policy, there would have been no unpatriotic opposition and no Hartford Convention. They might instead have profited by Madison's mismanagement of the War of 1812, just as their political descendants, the Whigs, profited by the Mexican War, and obtained a new lease of life. But it was absolutely impossible for the Federalists to enter into any such policy. For years they had been bound, intellectually and commercially, to England. For years they had been obsessed with the idea that her power was the "bulwark of the liberties of this country and of mankind" against France. For years Pickering and Lowell, and occasionally Otis, had dinned into the ears of the people the idea that war with Eng-

[3] E. Quincy, *J. Quincy*, 240. Carey's *Olive Branch*, chap. XLI, gives the votes on all war measures previous to the declaration, italicizing the names of Quincy and others who voted against the actual declaration.

[4] H. Adams, *United States*, VI, 174, quoting Foster's dispatches (which mention no names) to his government.

land was the worst of all possible evils. To ask the Federal leaders, then, to blow the war-trumpet against "Britain's fast-anchored Isle," was to ask them to belie their past records and their own consciences. Although Otis wrote Quincy hopefully that the new policy was generally approved in Boston,[5] this approval was based on Quincy's assurance that the Democrats could not be kicked into a war, and vanished as soon as it became evident that the war-hawks were in earnest. Even Quincy inconsistently voted against the declaration, and thus exposed himself and his faction to the charge of insincerity.

Otis could never be brought to the point of regarding lightly a war with England. In fact, he made an earnest effort to prevent it through correspondence with Harrison Gray, his loyalist uncle in London. The first letter in the series that has been preserved, dated April 30, 1811, contains this sensible résumé of the situation:

> You cannot be more afflicted than I am at the state of the political relations of the two countries; in which I expect no change for the better. The Government of this Country is unquestionably intimidated though not corrupted by France; and the mass of people are infected with strong prejudices against G Britain. The most intelligent and respectable men in the country are not however of this description. They tremble for the prosperity and fate of Britain, and consider her justly as the Bulwark of the liberties of this country and mankind. Unfortunately however, your Cabinet has not adopted a course of measures which without injury to themselves, would have enabled the wise men of this country to become an overmatch for the knaves & fools who have always too great a share of influence in democratic governments. I doubt not, that your Government, by repealing your orders in Council which have produced no benefit to the nation, and by such partial concessions as the times would justify, in favor of American

[5] E. Quincy, *J. Quincy*, 241.

Commerce, might have enabled the real friends to your prosperity, to have given a direction to the policy and measures of this administration, which would have cemented the friendship of the two countries, without any sacrafice of your principles of maratime law, or any abandonment of our just pretensions. But my fears for the event are daily augmenting. The American Cabinet is doubtless weak and perhaps not very well affected towards your Country. But you must allow in return, that John Bull, though a good sailor, soldier, and in fact on the whole a good fellow, is a bad negotiator and politician.[6]

Harrison Gray, greatly pleased with this letter, presented a copy of it to an opposition newspaper, the London *Morning Chronicle*, where it was printed on June 24, 1811, as "from a Gentleman high in office and of great respectability in America." Otis, apparently, had no objection to having his letters so used, for he continued writing in the same strain to his uncle. Another interesting letter of the same series is dated January, 1812:

You will perceive by the papers by the Sally Anne, that our Government professes the intention to assume a very warlike attitude, and that the sentiment of indignation throughout the country, at the continuation of the Orders in Council; is loud and universal from both parties. The motives which induce your Government to continue them, are quite incomprehensible to the best friends of Great Britain in this country; and the effect will be, to make every man odious who dares to express a wish for your success and prosperity — a sentiment still common to our best men, but which an adherence to this system will impair and destroy. It is too true that the repeal of the Berlin and Milan Decrees are merely nominal; and that our Administration have become willingly the dupes to the insidious policy of Napoleon. But why should your Cabinet mind that, why should they not embrace any pretence for restoring harmony between our countries, especially *as it will, of consequence, be followed by hostility on the part of France.* Napoleon will renew his outrages the moment we are friends,

[6] From Otis's MS. copy.

and the natural ties which connect Great Britain and America would be drawn closer. On the contrary, the scrupulous adherence of your Cabinet to an empty punctilio, will too probably unite the whole country in opposition to your nation, and sever for generations, perhaps forever, interests that have the most natural ties of affinity, and men who ought to feel and love like brethren.[7]

This was excellent advice for the British government, which, if followed in time, would most certainly have prevented the War of 1812. The language is a refreshing contrast to that used by the Federalists in Washington to the British minister, and to the tone of Pickering's contemporary correspondence with his English friends.[8] Harrison Gray gave the letter for publication to the London *Evening Star*, and also sent a copy of it to the Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval. In reply he received the following cold and caustic note, written in the third person in Perceval's hand:

Mr. P's compliments to Mr. G— and thanks him for his note and its enclosure from his American correspondent. It is impossible for Mr P to enter into the subject of that enclosure in a note to Mr G, but he begs to assure him that the Order in Council is not grounded on *extravagant and fancied punctilio* but that whether wisely or not, it is deem'd by those who advise it, to be of absolutely essential and indispensable necessity to the hopes of maintaining the independence and security of the British Empire.

Downing Street 22 Feby 1812.[9]

This was not the end of the matter, by any means. Within a few days, much to Harrison Gray's astonish-

[7] London *Evening Star*, February 18, 1812.

[8] *N. E. Federalism*, 387. Pickering is so convinced of the justice of England's policy and the injustice of Madison's, that he is "astonished that it has a single advocate or apologist in the British Parliament," and is most indignant with Whitbread's defense of neutral rights.

[9] From the original, sent by Harrison Gray to Otis.

ment and his nephew's subsequent disgust, an incorrect copy of the letter, wrongly dated, appeared printed on a handbill headed "Extract of a Letter from the Honorable H. G. Otis, Esq. of Boston, to his friend in London, dated January 14, 1812." Published by a friend, to whom Gray had given a copy of the letter, it was circulated by the Whigs, who desired a repeal of the Orders. When copies eventually reached Boston, one was republished in the *Centinel* on April 25, 1812, in order to anticipate the *Chronicle*, which had also secured a specimen.[10] This publicity caused Otis and his friends considerable embarrassment, for the letter states that England's motives for a continuance of the Orders in Council "are quite incomprehensible to the best friends of Great Britain in this country," whereas the leading Federalists had frequently and loudly defended the Orders as necessary to Great Britain in her struggle with Napoleon. The printers of the handbill, moreover, had twisted Otis's statement, "the repeal of the Berlin and Milan Decrees are merely nominal," into "the repeal . . . has been less formal than it should have been," a statement which was naturally construed as a Federalist admission that the repeal had actually taken place.

It further appears that this letter did have some effect in procuring the final repeal of the Orders in Council, on June 17, 1812. Harrison Gray writes Otis, July 13:

> Your letter was introduced by several of the Committees of the Manufactory Citys to the Ministers to convince them that the Orders in Council were Universally Obnoxious in all the States, and that the removal of them would prevent a War between the Countries, and be the means of establishing harmony that woud be lasting. Several Gentlemen that composed

[10] It also appears in Niles, II, 160, as an illustration that even the Federalists acknowledge that causes for war exist, and in Carey's *Olive Branch*, chap. XLV, with four pages of comment, praising Otis for his sentiments.

the above Committees, told me that your Country shoud know it, & if I woud [give] them something to Publish they woud put it in a Newspaper for the purpose of it being sent to America.

But this estimate of Otis's influence must have been exaggerated. The letter is not mentioned in the minutes of evidence taken before the parliamentary committee that heard the manufacturers' complaints. The London *Evening Star* of July 13, 1812, to be sure, states that Otis's letter "had no doubt great weight in hastening the repeal of the obnoxious Orders in Council," and that "Mr Otis and his relative are therefore certainly entitled to the best thanks of both Countries," but the force of this statement is somewhat impaired by a naïve disclosure of Harrison Gray that he wrote the article himself. "The Editor of the Star charged me the enormous sum of one pound for putting it in his papers," he wrote Otis. "Tho it is a high charge I paid it with pleasure as it cannot fail to place you in high estimation in both Countries & that Adds great pleasure to your Uncle." Although the old gentleman's pride in his nephew led him to overestimate his influence, still, with all due allowance for exaggeration, the statement of the manufacturers' committee to Gray shows that Otis's letter must have had some weight in procuring the repeal, albeit a feather in comparison to other influences.

The revocation of the Orders in Council came on June 17, just too late to prevent the conflict of 1812. Within twenty-four hours of their repeal, the restrictive system of Jefferson and Madison was definitely cast aside, and Congress passed a declaration of war against Great Britain.

At no time since the beginning of difficulties with England in 1805, could a war with that country have secured less support from New England than in 1812.

Yankee distrust of Madison's administration had increased steadily during the last three years. The war was declared ostensibly to defend the interests of the commercial classes — for "free trade and sailors' rights" — and continued for the latter cause alone after the repeal of the Orders in Council was known. But this talk of free trade and sailors' rights from Southern and Western Congressmen, whose sections possessed neither commerce nor sailors, seemed bitter mockery to New England Federalists who possessed both. The refusal of Congress to provide a navy was evidence of hypocrisy. "Give us thirty swift-sailing, well-appointed frigates," said Senator Lloyd, "and I will engage completely to officer your whole fleet from New England alone," [11] but Southern and Western prejudice against a navy, traces of which remain even to-day, was sufficiently strong, even on the brink of war with the greatest maritime power in the world, to prevent any addition to the remnant of John Adams's old fleet.

The principal reason for making war on Great Britain, as the Federalists perceived, was the Western desire to conquer Canada, a policy that aroused little sympathy in New England. Other reasons were unjustly said to be French influence,[12] hostility to commerce in general and to New England in particular — the old party cries of 1794, 1798, 1804, and 1808, that had been reiterated constantly by the Essex Junto, always believed by them, and occasionally by a majority of the New England people. The circle of adherents to this belief now visibly widened. On July 21, 1812, a popular convention in Cape Cod, a district ordinarily immune to the wiles of Essex Federalism, declared: "We consider the War in which we are

[11] J. S. Barry, *Massachusetts*, III, 370.

[12] Since Madison still insisted that France had repealed the Berlin and Milan Decrees, in spite of indubitable evidence to the contrary, it is not surprising that the Federalists raised the cry of French influence.

now engaged, as having originated in hatred to *New-England*, and to Commerce; in subservience to the interest, or obedience to the mandates of the Tyrant of *France*."[13]

National honor was also invoked to justify the declaration of war. But, "if war has been declared to cleanse the honor of the government," inquired New England Federalism, "should not that power have been selected, as our enemy, which imprinted the stain? Which, while it has declared the Americans to be '*more dependent, than Jamaica, which at least has its Assembly of Representatives and its privileges*,'[14] has practically expressed her contempt of our government and her disregard of national law by seizing, scuttling, and burning our merchant vessels without even the forms of regular adjudication?"[15] The conduct of Great Britain had been unjust and obstinate, but nevertheless straightforward. Our demands for revocation of the Orders, and relinquishment of impressment, had been met by a simple *non possumus*, and when the Orders were revoked, the act was sincere. Napoleon, on the other hand, had inflicted fully as great injuries on our national honor and interests as Great Britain, while he concealed his actions under a pretense of friendship; he had professed his love for the Americans, while he confiscated their property and imprisoned their sailors. If war was necessary for national honor, the Federal party spoke with one voice in favor of a war with France. As Otis wrote his uncle, "the most intelligent and respectable men in the country . . . tremble for the prosperity and fate of Britain, and consider her justly as the Bulwark of the liberties of this country and mankind." This

[13] *Centinel*, August 5, 1812.

[14] A quotation from the Duc de Cadore's note of February 14, 1810, to General Armstrong — Wait's *State Papers*, VII, 237.

[15] *Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Counties of Hampshire, Franklin, and Hampden* (Northampton, 1812), p. 10.

belief happened to be justifiable in 1812. Napoleon had brought his Continental System almost to perfection. He had suppressed every vestige of liberty in Western Europe, save in England and recalcitrant Spain. Within a week after America declared war on Great Britain, Napoleon's Grand Army entered Russia. England's cause was that of mankind, and the United States fought on the wrong side from 1812 to 1815.

These are the principal reasons why the War of 1812 was odious to Otis and to the entire Federal party, especially in New England. But their implacable hatred of the administration and their course of violent opposition to the war, culminating in the Hartford Convention, are inexplicable without a knowledge of two incidents that took place, one shortly before, one shortly after the declaration of war: the so-called "Henry Plot," and the Baltimore Riots.

The Henry affair was an attempt on the part of the national administration, at a time when New England should have been handled with gloves, to fasten on Otis and his Boston friends the stigma of disloyalty and treason. We have already alluded to John Henry the spy, who visited Boston during the embargo period, in order to find out whether the disaffection in New England could be turned to account by the British government.[16] His services had been wholly gratuitous, yet he expected for his treachery some pecuniary reward from the British government, and later went to England in order to claim it. His efforts were unsuccessful, and in

[16] Chap. XVIII, above. John Henry was born in Ireland in 1777, came to the United States in 1798, procured a commission in the army through the influence of a rich uncle, and married into a leading Philadelphia family. He afterwards became afflicted with Anglomania, resigned his commission, and removed to Montreal. The following account of the "Henry Plot" is compiled mainly from the Henry MSS. in the Library of Congress; Henry Adams, "Count Edward de Crillon," in *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, I; and contemporary newspapers.

1811, while poverty-stricken and resentful, he met somewhere in England, and took into his confidence, a person who styled himself the Comte Édouard de Crillon. This gentleman was a typical Gascon adventurer, who at that time had taken refuge in England as the only European country out of reach of Napoleon's police. Together they conceived the brilliant scheme of betraying to the American government, for a consideration, Henry's copies of his correspondence with the governor of Canada, and then of returning to France to enjoy the proceeds, as well as the prestige of having exposed the secret diplomacy of *Albion perfide.*

Their plan succeeded admirably. The two adventurers would probably have been glad to dispose of the documents for five or ten thousand dollars. But Madison and Monroe betrayed such eagerness to obtain assured evidence, as they were told it was, of an Anglo-Federalist plot to divide the Union, that Henry demanded twenty-five thousand pounds sterling, and haughtily threatened to burn his documents rather than take less. Since it appeared, however, that the State Department had at its disposal only fifty thousand dollars, the sum total of the contingent fund, Crillon "persuaded" Henry to accept that sum. The documents changed hands on February 7, 1812, and on March 9 the President transmitted them to Congress, together with a message stating that they proved that a secret agent of the British government had been engaged "in intrigues with the disaffected, for the purpose of . . . destroying the Union and forming the Eastern part thereof into a political connection with Great Britain."[17]

It is rather a shock to find Madison and Monroe paying over fifty thousand dollars of the nation's money for

[17] The message and documents are printed in *Annals of Congress*, 12th Cong.

party purposes. The Henry papers contained no military or diplomatic secrets which could have been useful to the government in the impending war;[18] hence the only possible object of their purchase and disclosure must have been to stir up war sentiment, and to disgrace the Federal party. That was, indeed, the only use ever made of the documents. They were seized upon with joy by the majority in Congress, and immediately printed. The Democratic press, following the cue in Madison's message, took it for granted that the existence of a plot between the British government and the Boston Federalists was as good as proved. No names were mentioned in the published documents, but their effect was heightened by rows of asterisks, which (the Boston *Chronicle* assumed) represented names which Henry had been paid by the Essex Junto to suppress. In reality, they stood for passages which Henry had struck out before selling the documents, because they contained statements so preposterous as to invalidate all the rest.[19]

The sensation felt by Otis and his friends on finding themselves accused of plotting disunion with a young man whom they had thought merely a pleasure-seeker, may well be imagined. Otis's half-sister Harriet, a romantic young lady of twenty-four, was in Washington when the Henry papers were disclosed, and commented as follows in her diary:

Monday March 9th. The Senate were detained untill a late hour reading the base and unexpected disclosures of John Henry!!! the vain self-sufficient but as I had imagined noble minded friend of the enthusiastic H. C. this man has so lowered his proud spirit as to become the base agent of the british

[18] In the same volume with the Henry MSS. are some interesting disclosures of British military and diplomatic secrets, but, internal evidence shows that they were not procured from Henry.

[19] The erased words are easily legible in the Henry MSS.

government in spying out the dissentions of the country to which he had sworn allegiance and on being dissapointed of a reward equal to his expectations has had the shameless effrontery to betray the transactions of his employers to our government. This is now presented to the public to implicate the northern federalists in a view of severing the union and becoming attached to G Britain. but I trust the aim will be fruitless, for what has it discovered but that the british ministers are on the watch to take advantage of querelous murmurs of men who when they see their interests neglected will scold and complain as every man in a free government has a right to do without being suspected of traitorous designs. But how astonishing does it seem to me that this rolling stone who fluttered about [!] without any other apparent aim than his own amusement should have been harbouring in his breast such views and the romantic generous spirit that seemed too sublimated to "grub this earthly hole, in low pursuit" should degrade itself to such baseness. I now recur with curiosity to every interview I ever had with him and every word I have heard him utter to discover some mark of treachery.

Josiah Quincy immediately forced a congressional investigation of the government's transaction. Madison, in transmitting the documents to Congress, had included a letter from Henry, dated February 20, 1812, in which the latter affected, as a penitent patriot, to make a gift of them to the government. By tracing the treasury warrants, Quincy discovered not only the price paid Henry, but the fact that the transaction was completed two weeks before February 20. He also forced Madison to acknowledge publicly that he possessed no names of any confederates of Henry.[20] A careful reading of the published

[20] Secretary Monroe was so disappointed at this turn of affairs that he wrote Joel Barlow, the American minister in Paris, where Henry had taken refuge, requesting him to procure some names of conspirators from Henry for the government to use in self-defense. Henry MSS., 96. In addition to the large sum paid Henry, Monroe gave Crillon a draft for $5000 on the minister in Paris, who refused, however, to honor it, when he found that the "Count" was an impostor.

documents proved, moreover, that Henry had neither hinted nor disclosed to any one in Boston his British credentials, and that suggestions he had made for New England to secede or to seek British protection had met with no encouragement in that quarter.

From the bitter newspaper controversy that followed, the Federalists emerged with flying colors, and succeeded fairly well in shifting the obloquy of the affair from themselves to Madison. But the Democratic party, unwilling to give up their attempt to inculpate some one with Henry, intended Otis to be their first victim. On June 26, 1812, the Senate of Massachusetts[21] passed a resolve stating that whereas in one of these documents (Henry's statement of services in his application to the British government), Henry claimed to have influenced the "Patriotick Proceedings" of Massachusetts, in 1809, it be ordered that Harrison Gray Otis and Timothy Bigelow, respectively President of the Senate and Speaker of the House at that time, lay before the legislature copies of all letters or documents connected with those proceedings. The House, in reply, denounced this resolve as a base insinuation, passed a vote of confidence in Otis and Bigelow, and pointed out that the dates of Henry's letters showed that he reached Boston in 1809 only on March 7, when the "Patriotick Proceedings" were over and the legislature adjourned. This was, indeed, a sufficient refutation of Henry's preposterous claim.[22] The Democratic press, however, published the Senate's charge without the answer, and consequently it became an article of Democratic faith that Otis and Bigelow had been hand and glove with Henry. Amos Kendall records

[21] The Democrats retained control of the Senate in 1812, by virtue of the Gerrymander.

[22] *Centinel*, July 4, 1812.

in his autobiography an incident illustrating this attitude that he witnessed in a State Senate debate in 1813. The question under discussion was whether officers of the United States could hold seats in the Senate of Massachusetts. Otis argued in the negative. One of the Democrats then replied that

> he thought those who were ready to fight the battles of their country were quite as much entitled to seats in that body as those . . . closeted with British spies. Otis sprang to his feet and said any man that charged him with having been closeted with a British spy was a scoundrel. He sat down amidst the applause of spectators and cries of Order.[23]

Of all political mistakes that Madison ever made, the purchase and publication of the Henry papers was the worst. On the eve of a war, that demanded for its successful termination the whole energy of a united nation, he sought to stigmatize with disloyalty the leading men of a powerful section of the country. Had there been no other cause, the tactless disclosure of the "Henry Plot" was enough to drive Otis and his friends into an opposition that tended toward disunion.

Three months before the declaration of war (June 18) came the publication of the Henry papers; one month after it occurred the Baltimore Riots, which further embittered Federalism against the war and Democracy. This affair was a contest between the Baltimore *Federal Republican* and the Baltimore rabble, which thereby gained the unenviable reputation that it took care to live up to for the next half-century. The *Federal Republican*, that like other Federalist sheets had strongly denounced the declaration of war, was frequently threatened with violence by its Democratic opponents. After one attack

[23] Kendall, *Autobiography*, 76.

by the mob, unhindered by the city authorities, the editors prepared for forcible resistance. In the printing-office gathered General James Lingan and "Light Horse Harry" Lee, both veterans of the Revolution, and many younger men of the best blood in Maryland, to defend the right of free speech and a free press. A mob, having surrounded the building on July 27, became so menacing that the editors and their friends surrendered themselves to the authorities and were locked up in the city jail for protection. That night the mob broke open the jail, beat and tortured the prisoners, and on the prison steps left for dead nine mutilated bodies. General Lingan was killed, General Lee was crippled for life, and the others were frightfully injured.

To comprehend the profound sensation of horror and fear that this event caused in Federalist circles, we must remember that for eighteen years Federalism had been prophesying that Democracy inevitably would produce the excesses of the French Revolution. It now seemed that a Reign of Terror was at hand for America. A war of conquest against England, ranting demagogues in control of the government, mob-rule and massacre, condoned by the Democratic press, within fifty miles of the capital — the parallel between France in 1793 and America in 1812 was complete. The impression in Otis's family circle is indicated in the diary of his sister Harriet:

> Sunday, 2nd August [1812] . . . Before we went to church our neighbor Davis, came in to give Papa the frightful details of the mob in Balto. in which the rioters broke down the gaol where the obnoxious persons were confined and massacred 28![24] Oh unhappy country how are your smiles turned into tears of blood. — Step by step we have been following and

[24] Mr. Davis probably got his information from a handbill, headed "Madison's Mob," sent out from the *Gazette* office.

adopting the follies and crimes of a nation, as notorious for both, that one would think rational beings would shrink with disgust from the most remote resemblance to it — but the influence of vicious example proves from this instance to be greater than even the universal confession of all ages have ever believed it to be.

Miss Otis's sentiments were shared by a majority of her fellow-citizens. A Boston town meeting on August 6 adopted resolutions nearly unanimously to the effect that

> In the circumstances attending the origin, the progress, and the catastrophe of this Bloody scene, we discern with painful emotion, not merely an aggravation of the calamities of the present unjust and ruinous war, but a prelude to the dissolution of all free government and the establishment of a reign of Terror. It is beside, marked with a strong resemblance to the early excesses of the French revolution. . . . The mob erects its horrid crest over the ruins of liberty, of property, of the domestic relations of life and of civil institutions; untill satiated or fatigued with slaughter it resigns its bludgeons and its pikes at the feet of a dictator, and raises its bloody hands to worship some God of its Idolatry, to whose more tolerable despotism all ranks of men become ready to submit.[25]

The resolutions "will not admit" the charge of the Federalist press, that Madison was responsible for the riots, but "rather consider them as of French origin and the first fruits of that unnatural and dreadful alliance into which we have entered, in fact, if not in form." Every citizen is requested to arm himself and "to hold himself ready at a moment's warning to protect and support the magistrates and Sheriff of this County, in suppressing every riot, tumult, or unlawful assembly." In the debate, Miss Otis informs us, her "dear eloquent brother distinguished himself and excited more than usual applause."

[25] *Boston Town Records, 1796–1813*, 321–22.

The intensity of feeling excited in New England by these two affairs, the Henry Plot and the Baltimore Riots, are of the deepest significance in the history of the War of 1812, for they taught New England Federalism to look on the national administration as a far more dangerous enemy than the nation against which war had been declared.

CHAPTER XXI

BOSTON FEDERALISM AND THE WAR

1812–1814, ÆT. 47–49

ORGANIZE a *peace party* throughout your Country, and let all other party distinctions vanish . . . meet and consult together for the common good in your towns and counties. . . . Express your sentiments without fear, and let the sound of your disapprobation of this war be loud and deep. Let it be distinctly understood, that in support of it your conformity to the requisitions of law will be the result of principle and not of choice. If your sons must be torn from you by conscriptions, consign them to the care of GOD; but let there be no volunteers except for defensive war.[1]

This extract from the "Address to the People of Massachusetts," issued by the lower house of the General Court a week after war was declared, gives the keynote to the attitude of Boston, and of New England Federalism, toward the second war with Great Britain. Otis and his colleagues might well have served their own ambitions and future reputations by following Josiah Quincy's discarded policy of supporting the war, in order to profit by Madison's maladministration of it. They had no such economic justification for opposing the war as they had had for withstanding Jefferson's embargo and the restrictive system. The hostilities enriched Massachusetts at the expense of the rest of the country. Privateering furnished her shipowners and seagoing population with profitable employment; the blockade south of

[1] Niles's *Register*, II, 418.

New York gave her merchants the monopoly of the importing business; her situation offered favorable opportunities for smuggling and for supplying the enemy. Non-intercourse with Great Britain gave an immense impetus to the infant manufacturing industries of New England. During the war, specie flowed into Boston banks to such an extent that they were charged with deliberately attempting to bankrupt the rest of the country. Moreover, if the South and West had effected their principal object, and conquered Canada, the northern and commercial section of the Union would thereby have been greatly strengthened. But believing, as they did, that Great Britain was the palladium of rational liberty against tyranny and democracy, that America had no real cause of complaint against her, that the war was caused not by any desire to protect "free trade and sailors' rights," but by French influence, Western land hunger, and Democratic hatred of Old and New England; that in a word it was unnecessary, wicked, parricidal, and unchristian, the New England Federalists would have been indeed untrue to their principles and their consciences had they given the war the slightest support, moral or physical. They followed out consistently the policy recommended by the legislature. Although Federalists in other parts of the Union, who did not share these violent prejudices, accepted commissions in the army, and otherwise coöperated loyally to aid the success of the war, the New England Federalists did everything short of actual treason to bring disaster on their own flag; hoping that by this means Madison would be forced to a speedy peace, and trusting "British magnanimity" to prevent the peace from being disastrous. The Federalist press of Boston consistently defended every act of the enemy, even the use of savage allies,

Cockburn's atrocities on the shores of the Chesapeake, and the burning of Washington; and ill concealed its delight at the British victories over its own countrymen. Had Otis and his friends had their way, Massachusetts would not have contributed a single recruit or a single penny to the war. Luckily the people saved the honor of their state by contributing more recruits to the regular army than any single state save New York,[2] although, with singular inconsistency, they maintained the Federal party in power. And as an offset to the unpatriotic attitude of her politicians, New England furnished more than her share of war leaders — military heroes like Miller, Macomb, and Ripley; naval heroes like Isaac Hull, Perry, and Porter; and diplomats like Jonathan Russell and John Quincy Adams.

The Massachusetts legislature, in which Otis continued to sit during the war, was consistently pro-British, even to the point of refusing a vote of thanks to Captain Lawrence for his capture of the *Peacock*, on the ground that "in a war like the present" it was "not becoming a moral and religious people to express any approbation of military and naval exploits." Yet the Boston Federalists were unable to resist the infectious enthusiasm caused by the remarkable exploits of the American navy. We find Otis's name on the committees that got up dinners for Hull and Bainbridge, naval celebrations in Faneuil Hall, and a presentation of plate to Commodore Perry after the battle of Lake Erie. After all, it was the old Federalist navy, manned for the most part by Yankee tars and officers, that effected these triumphs in spite of its neglect by Jefferson and Madison.

But in celebrating their own naval victories, Otis and his friends did not expend one tithe of the energy and

[2] Henry Adams, *United States*, VIII, 235.

enthusiasm that they displayed over two European events, the retreat of Napoleon from Moscow, and the entrance of the Allies into Paris. The first was celebrated on March 25, 1813, under the direction of a committee of which Otis was a member.[3] The festivities began with religious "solemnities" in King's Chapel, at which the Rev. Mr. Channing offered up a prayer, which "united the elegance, and what the French call the *onction* of Fénelon, with the simplicity of the apostolic age." Then followed an extraordinary discourse delivered by the Rev. Dr. Freeman, composed of passages from Scripture so cunningly woven together as to compose a history of Europe and America during the past decade, including the embargo, the present war, and the recent events in Russia. After the King's Chapel solemnities, a large dinner was held at the Exchange Coffee-House. Otis presided, and "before the first toast . . . addressed the company in a speech replete with sound sentiments, expressed with that felicity both of style and manner of which those only can form an adequate idea who have been the witnesses of his eloquence."[4] Then came a long series of toasts, illustrated by transparencies and "original odes," many of which contained pointed references to the administration's supposed alliance with Bonaparte. The *Centinel*, indeed, remarked that the pleasure of the entertainment was "enhanced by the hope that these events would at least awaken our infatuated rulers to a sense of their errors, and would be considered by them as the 'handwriting on

[3] The account from the *Centinel* of March 27, from which I quote, together with Dr. Freeman's discourse, is in *Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc.*, XVIII, 379–87.

[4] Otis's speech is printed in Niles, IV, 89. This celebration was approved of and imitated by Federalists in other parts of the Union. John Randolph wrote Josiah Quincy, "The festival does honor to those who planned and presided over it, and, as *primus inter pares*, I beg that you present my best respects to Mr. Otis." E. Quincy, *J. Quincy*, 329. Cf. McMaster, *United States*, IV, 225; R. G. Harper, *Select Works*.

the wall' intimating their approaching ruin, unless they accelerate a peace."

Similarly, in 1814, Boston Federalism had no hosannas for Lundy's Lane, or Plattsburg, or New Orleans, but it did hold a "Splendid and Solemn Festival" on June 15, in order to commemorate the "downfall of the Tyrant" (Napoleon), who was probably more hated in Boston, than anywhere else outside London. There was an appropriate sermon from William Ellery Channing, an oration from Christopher Gore, and a turgid ode recited by Lucius Manlius Sargent. In the evening the State House was illuminated, a band played in the colonnade, red-hot shot and "carbonic comets" were fired from the Neck, and the former mansion of John Hancock was adorned with transparencies showing fleurs-de-lys and "Honor to the Allies." Doubtless Otis and his friends were right in deeming the retreat from Moscow and the entry into Paris of greater importance than the victories of their own countrymen; but the mere fact that they appreciated this difference shows how utterly devoid they were of American feeling, how hopelessly mired in the ancient rut of colonialism.

Let us now examine the ways and means by which Massachusetts Federalism carried out this policy of peaceable opposition and "no voluntary support." Governor Strong took the initiative on June 22, the day before the declaration of war reached Boston, by refusing to comply with a request of the Federal government for a detachment of state militia. Four days later he issued a proclamation for a public fast to atone for a declaration of war "against the nation from which we are descended, and which for many generations has been the bulwark of the religion we profess." This last phrase vied with Pickering's toast to "the world's last hope" as the favor-

ite theme of Democratic anathema and jest. The Federalist clergy improved the fast day by preaching to their congregations on the detestable and wicked character of the war,[5] and the Federalist press at the same time took a tone so threatening as seriously to alarm the administration party. Ex-Governor Gerry wished a general order of arrest issued for Federalist printers, and from his sick-bed warned the President of the Senate that the Federalists might seize the Castle by a *coup de main*, raise the "Standard of Rebellion," and join a British force in executing the "Henry Plot."[6] There is no doubt but that Democratic fears of an Anglo-Federalist plot in 1812 were as genuine as Otis's fears of a Gallo-Jeffersonian combination in 1798. In view of the conduct of Massachusetts Federalists during the preceding four years, they were fully as justified. The Democratic Senate of Massachusetts proceeded to announce, as the Federalists had done in '98, that "opposition must cease"; but no empty defiance could cow Federalism. In obedience to the advice of the lower house, the people "posted in all directions to meetings of their primary assemblies," and, as Otis afterwards wrote, "the voice of opposition to the policy of the war, like peals of incessant thunder, echoed from every point of the compass."[7]

Boston let its opposition be heard "loud and deep" in Faneuil Hall on July 15. To this meeting, originally called by the Republicans, only partisans of the war were invited, but much to their dismay, the Federalists turned out in numbers so great as completely to overwhelm their opponents and to pass resolutions that breathed war on

[5] See Matthew Carey's "Anthology of Sedition" in his *Olive Branch*, chap. LVI.

[6] Gerry to Samuel Dana, June 27 and July 6, 1812. Gerry MSS.

[7] *Otis' Letters*, 27.

Madison, instead of on George III. The *Centinel* of July 18 informs us that Otis worthily upheld the debate on the Federalist side:

> The debate was closed by the "man of the people," the Hon. Mr. Otis. It is unnecessary to say more than that he renewed, by his glowing and pathetic eloquence, that enthusiasm which has been so often excited in the breasts of his fellow-citizens, by his patriotic and masterly speeches; *orations* they ought to be called; for, like DEMOSTHENES, rousing the Athenians to watchfulness against PHILIP, his addresses have awakened the citizens of *Boston* to a virtuous jealousy of the intrigues of *France*, and of those who are co-operating with her ruler to destroy the liberties and happiness of mankind.

Several times a year, during the war, whenever any particular military or naval event seemed to warrant it, a town meeting was called in Boston, and the citizens were given an opportunity to hear the Federalist and Democratic views from the best speakers on both sides. "The town meetings held in Boston during the war of 1812," wrote George Ticknor a half-century later,[8] were more like the popular meetings in Athens than anything of the kind the world has ever seen. Commerce and trade were dead; the whole population was idle, and all minds intent on the politics of the day, as affecting their individual existence and happiness. Faneuil Hall could be filled with an eager and intelligent crowd at any moment of day or night. Town meetings were often continued two or three days, morning and evening. . . . All the speeches were extemporaneous; it would have lowered a man's reputation materially if it had been supposed that he had prepared and committed a speech to memory." Of the many able orators of both parties in Boston at that time, Otis was easily first. The vivid im-

[8] *Life, Letters, etc., of George Ticknor*, I, 20.

pression made by his speeches was thus described, many years later, by one who heard him:

> I well recollect some of the brilliant and impressive sentences in his speeches made on these occasions. When the news reached Boston that Hull had surrendered his army in Canada, it produced a great excitement, and, soon after, notice was given that a meeting of citizens would be held in Faneuil Hall. A large number was collected, and Mr. Otis addressed them in an eloquent speech. He said, "our political orb has almost completed its revolution; it is about to set in the cold and dreary regions of Canada, where night and chaos will brood over the last of desolated republics."
>
> At another time, when Bonaparte was making progress in his military conquests, news arrived that he had gained a great victory over the allies, and that the killed and wounded on both sides was terrible. Notice was given that there would be a meeting in Faneuil Hall, in the afternoon of the next day. There was a great gathering of citizens, and Mr. Otis took his seat on the platform. When he arose to speak, he was greeted with loud applause, and, after it had subsided, he commenced by stating the effects the war between this country and England had produced in Boston. He said industry was paralyzed, the music of the saw and the hammer was no longer heard, and a general gloom seemed to hang over the town. He had sought retirement in the country, for a while, to avoid meeting the sad countenances of his fellow-citizens. In coming into town that morning, as he looked at the grass covered with dew and saw the farmer mowing it down, he thought he perceived in the instrument which he used, a type of that despotism which mows down nations. These are mere specimens of his happy use of figurative language.[9]

This custom of protesting against the war in popular meetings speedily developed into a movement for a state convention. The project did not originate with the Boston, or even, apparently, with the Massachusetts Federalists; it was probably suggested by the New Jersey "Friends of

[9] Francis Bassett, *Reminiscences*, 8.

Peace" (Federalists) who held a state convention of delegates at Trenton, on July 4, and through it issued a powerful remonstrance against the war.[10] Just ten days later, on July 14, a convention of delegates from over fifty towns in "Old Hampshire" — the three Connecticut River counties of Massachusetts, Hampshire, Hampden, and Franklin[11] — was held at Northampton, for the purpose of protesting against the war. Besides issuing an address to the people, the convention proceeded to appoint twelve delegates "to meet in a State Convention provided such a measure shall become necessary and be adopted in other parts of the Commonwealth." Within two weeks conventions in Essex and Plymouth Counties took similar action,[12] and the project was next taken up in the same Boston town meeting, of August 6, that drew up the hysterical resolutions on the Baltimore Riots. There Otis delivered a strong argument in favor of the state convention, when opposition suddenly appeared from an unexpected quarter. Samuel Dexter, a moderate Federalist who, unlike Otis, had never acted with the Essex Junto, and who already had stated publicly his intention to support the administration during the war,

[10] *Proceedings and Address of the Convention of Delegates to the People of New Jersey.* Trenton, 1812.

[11] The two last had been set off from Hampshire County within a year. "Old Hampshire" was the strongest Federalist district in Massachusetts, and absolutely controlled by its leading families, the Lymans, Dwights, Ashmuns, Millses, etc. These men acted independently of the Essex Junto, and looked for leadership more to the "River Gods" down the river at Hartford than to Boston. Northampton, it will be remembered (Vol. I, p. 333), led the way, in 1808, in the policy of memorializing Congress against the embargo, and a Hampshire County convention was held there in February, 1809, to protest against the Force Act. Joseph Lyman, the leader in the Northern convention movement of 1814, was a delegate to the convention of 1812. *Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates . . . holden at Northampton the 14th and 15th of July, 1812.* Northampton, 1812.

[12] *Declaration of the County of Essex, . . . by its delegates, assembled in convention at Ipswich, on Tuesday, the 21st July, 1812.* Salem, 1812; *Centinel,* August 8. Timothy Pickering was president of this body.

reminded the meeting of the mischievous effects of popular conventions at the time of Shays's Rebellion. He argued that a state convention, in the then excited state of popular feeling, might incite insurrection against the national government, and justify the Democratic imputations that the Federal party was seeking to disrupt the Union.[13]

This memorable speech effected its author's purpose of wrecking the state convention. Although the town meeting refused to be swayed by Dexter, and appointed a list of delegates, headed by Otis, to attend the convention;[14] and although a county convention in Worcester took similar action a few days later, no further mention of it was made in the press or elsewhere. The project was evidently dropped by common consent of the Federalist leaders. One only regrets that the sound common sense of Dexter's arguments did not permanently convince Otis of the futility of holding conventions in war time, unless, indeed, he were prepared for secession and civil war.

There is insufficient evidence available to reach a definite conclusion concerning the real objects of the leaders responsible for this state convention scheme. It seems highly probable, however, that it was intended as a skirmish preliminary to calling a New England or Northern convention.[15] Gouverneur Morris was then agitating for a Northern convention in New York; the Northampton Federalists were at the bottom of the Hartford Convention of 1814;[16] and, since one branch of the state government was still in the hands of the Democrats, a

[13] Boston papers of August, 1812; article by "Massachusetts" in Washington *National Intelligencer*, January 25, 1820.

[14] *Boston Town Records, 1796–1813*, 325.

[15] Cf. *N. E. Federalism*, 405, and resolutions of Ipswich Convention (Note 12, above.)

[16] See next chapter.

state convention was the only method, other than local meetings, by which the Massachusetts Federalists could have elected delegates to a Northern convention in 1812. It is also significant that Otis carefully avoids any mention of the state convention movement in his numerous defenses of the Hartford Convention. Its existence evidently conflicted with his contention that the latter assembly arose out of special circumstances in the year 1814. But no evidence exists in support of John Quincy Adams's charge (in his "Reply" of 1829), that the state convention was intended as a step towards disunion.[17] Disunion was looked upon by those New England leaders who were willing to contemplate it at all, as a last resort; and, moreover, they would have had no object in promoting it on the eve of a presidential election that seemed more than likely to return their party to power.

Otis, it will be remembered, was a prominent delegate at the Federalist National Convention at New York in September, 1812, and the principal exponent of a coalition with the New York Clintonians.[18] Although no definite nomination was made in New York, the Federalist press in Massachusetts soon afterwards announced that the Federalist electors would vote for De Witt Clinton,

[17] *N. E. Federalism*, 220, 240, 275. He completes the story by stating that Dexter was immediately hounded out of the Federal party for the part he took in the town meeting of August 6. Dexter's letter of September 12, 1812, to Otis (following chap. XVI, above), proves the incorrectness of this assertion. Adams says further: "In 1812, it was openly preached from the temple of almighty God in Boston that the object of that convention was to cut the connection of the Union." No such statement appears in any of the printed sermons of 1812, nor have I found a reference to it in the contemporary press. Mr. Henry Adams adopts as facts his grandfather's polemics of 1829 without criticism (*United States*, VI, 402). The Federalist press of Boston contained many threats of disunion at this time, the object of which seems to have been to intimidate the administration into accepting the offers of armistice and peace made by General Prevost and Admiral Warren. So Otis intimates in *Otis' Letters*, 27.

[18] See chap. XVI.

who was appealing for votes to the Federalists on the promise of a speedy peace, and to the Democrats on the ground of Madison's incapacity to carry on the war. Both arguments had a wide appeal, since the first six months of war were marked by a series of military disasters on the Canadian frontier. Clinton, although falling nineteen votes short of a majority in the electoral college, carried every state from Maryland eastward, except Vermont, and thus accentuated the sectional character of the war. But now that the hope of ending the war by a change of rulers was gone, the New England Federalists naturally fell back again on state rights, in order to force their desires on Madison's administration.

Throughout the war the Federal party in Massachusetts, and elsewhere in New England, steadily carried out its policy of giving the war the minimum of support consistent with obedience to the laws (as interpreted by Federalists), in the hope that it might further peace. Men and money were withheld, but no obstacle, it is believed, other than hostile public opinion, was placed in the way of voluntary enlistments in the regular army.[19] The governors of all the New England States, save New Hampshire, advised by the Supreme Court of Massachusetts that their action was constitutional, steadfastly maintained their right to comply or not with requisitions for militia, according to their own judgment.[20] The constitutional doctrine sustained by these authorities was

[19] Otis's *One of the Convention*, 41; cf., however, Randall, *Jefferson*, III, 416, and *Annals of Twelfth Congress*, 157. The fact that more men enlisted in the regular army from Massachusetts than from any other state save New York, shows that opposition, if it existed, was not very effective.

[20] So much has been written on the constitutional side of the militia question of the War of 1812 that it is unnecessary to go into it here. H. V. Ames, *State Docs. on Fed. Relations*, no. II, gives the essential documents, and excellent bibliographies.

another instance of the convenient shield that state rights afforded against unwelcome acts of the general government. Apart from the doctrine, however, there was a certain amount of justification in the governors' action. In July, 1812, almost the entire force of United States regulars, then garrisoning the coast forts, was marched away to the Canadian frontier, leaving the New England coast line defenseless, save for the militia. Distrustful as the Federalist state administrations were of the Washington government, they feared that any militia placed under its control would likewise be withdrawn for purposes of conquest. Nor was this fear confined to New England alone; Virginia, as well as Connecticut and Massachusetts, took steps to form a state army during the war. The War Department, moreover, acted with extraordinary tactlessness towards the Massachusetts militia by refusing, in an offensive manner, to send it the quota of arms required by an act of Congress,[21] and by appointing over the few detachments that did enter the national service, incompetent and objectionable officers.[22]

Otis took a spectacular part in this militia controversy early in 1814. When in November, 1813, Governor Chittenden of Vermont attempted to recall the Vermont militia from the national service, his indictment for treason was proposed in Congress. Otis, in reply, offered from the floor of the Massachusetts House, on January 14, 1814, a resolution that can only be taken as a threat to the national government. He believed it to be

> the duty of the State of Massachusetts to aid the Governor of Vermont & the people of that State or any other State with their whole power, in enabling them to support their consti-

[21] A. Bradford, *Massachusetts*, 393; *Public Docs. of the Leg. of Mass.* (1813), 56–69.

[22] W. H. Sumner, *East Boston*, 739.

tutional rights whenever the same shall be in danger of infringement from any quarter or that it will be the duty of the legislature whenever requested by the Legislature of Vermont or other State upon due evidence of such infringement to make provision by law for their effectual support.[23]

Since Congress never carried out its threat against Governor Chittenden, Otis's resolve was never adopted; but it was copied into almost every newspaper in the country, and created a tremendous sensation.[24] The legislature of New Jersey officially expressed its "contempt and abhorrence" for the "ravings of an infuriated faction, either as issuing from a legislative body, a maniac governor, or discontented and ambitious demagogues."[25] But John Randolph of Roanoake wrote Josiah Quincy:

I have seen Mr. Otis's motion, and I assure you that no occurrence since the war has made so deep an impression upon me. It has had the like effect upon all seriously thinking people with whom I have conversed. What a game of roundabout has been played since I was initiated into the mysteries of politics! I recollect the time when with Mr Otis *State rights* were as nothing in comparison with the proud prerogatives of the Federal government. *Then* Virginia was building an armory to enable her to resist *Federal usurpation*. You will not infer that I attach the least blame to Mr. Otis; far from it. I rejoice, on the contrary, to see him enlisted on the side of the *liberty of the subject and the rights of the States*.[26]

Whatever the Boston Federalists were able to effect by resolutions, celebrations, and withholding militia, was as nothing in comparison to the results of their financial

[23] MS. Journal, Ho. Rep., xxxiv, 173; Niles, v, 363.

[24] It was commented on favorably by several of the town memorials of February, 1814 (see next chapter). Belfast, for instance, "*Resolved* . . . that we approve the generous and magnanimous Resolution of the Hon. Harrison G. Otis calling the attention of the Legislature of Massachusetts to a subject of such high importance and so interesting to the feelings of every true Republican."

[25] Ames, *State Docs.*, no. II, 20.

[26] E. Quincy, *J. Quincy*, 349.

policy during the war. Various economic factors resulting from the war combined, as we have seen, to give New England a monopoly of supplying the rest of the country with manufactured and imported goods, and to attract the greater part of the specie in the country into Boston banks. These institutions, with one exception, were controlled by Federalists, — Otis was a director of several, — and financial circles in Philadelphia were similarly constituted. Otis's correspondence gives indubitable proof that an excellent understanding existed between the financial powers of both cities to withhold subscriptions to government loans until peace was assured. They hoped thus to force Madison to abandon his policy of conquest, and to make peace on a basis of *status quo ante bellum;* but they very nearly succeeded in bankrupting their government at the most critical period of the war.[27] The small amount of contributions secured in Boston — only seventy-five thousand dollars to the 1813 loan of sixteen millions, and less than one million to the 1814 loan of twenty-five[28] — indicates the power of this Federalist "money trust."

From Otis's correspondence it appears that David Parish of Philadelphia, one of the three foreign-born financiers who floated the loan of 1813, found it necessary to apologize for his action to Otis, by alleging his conviction that the government had already commenced a peace policy. An interesting incident of the last year of war is also revealed from the same source. On April 4, 1814, the government then being on the verge of bankruptcy, Congress authorized a new loan of twenty-five millions. Otis, and a number of other bankers in Boston

[27] Carey's *Olive Branch*, chap. LII.

[28] H. Adams, *United States*, VII, 45; VIII, 234. Cf. correspondence following this chapter.

and Philadelphia, including Parish and Charles Willing Hare, were exceedingly anxious to overrule their former policy, and subscribe to the loan. Patriotism had nothing to do with their new attitude. Money was plentiful and hard to place; they knew that the government would obtain the money somehow, probably in Europe; — in short, they were unwilling to let this excellent opportunity for a safe and lucrative investment escape them. To overcome the conscientious scruples of their friends, they urged that subscribing to loans was no greater encouragement of the war than importing goods and paying duties on them,[29] and that Federalists would not be exempt from the unfortunate consequences of a prostration of the public credit. The question was then discussed by the leading financiers of both cities at a private meeting in Boston, at which Otis, after having stated his case to the best of his abilities, was overruled.[30] It was determined, however, by those present, to tender their financial aid on receiving definite assurances from the government that satisfactory instructions had been given to the peace commissioners at Ghent.[31] Like any self-respecting government, it refused to give this information, and the loan proved a failure without Federalist aid. Otis insists, nevertheless, that no attempt was made to compel those present at the meeting to follow the opinion of the majority. Since the name of his friend Thomas H. Perkins, one of the principal financiers in Boston, is found among the subscribers, this statement is probably correct.[32]

The tide of Federalist reaction continued unabated in the state elections of the spring and summer of 1813. In

[29] So Israel Thorndike wrote Otis, April 23, 1814.
[30] *Otis' Letters*, 96.
[31] Lloyd's memorandum, below.
[32] *Otis' Letters*, 96; Secretary of Treasury's report on the loan.

Massachusetts, Caleb Strong was elected governor for the ninth time, by a plurality of 13,965 votes, an increase of 12,595 over that of 1812, and greater than in any gubernatorial election since 1803. In the House, to which Otis this year returned, the Federalist majority rose from 130 to 247, and in the Senate the previous year's Democratic majority of 14 was turned into a Federalist majority of 16, the Gerrymander being overwhelmed. Elsewhere, New Hampshire and Vermont were recovered from the Democracy, and for the first time New England presented a united front in opposition to the war.

Stimulated by this success, the tone of remonstrance in Massachusetts instantly rose, and showed a factious disposition. Governor Strong in his opening speech of the spring session, unearthed the old grievance of the admission of Louisiana to the Union.[33] Otis was chairman of the House committee to which this speech was referred, and the committee's report, that he probably drafted, endorsed the Governor's remarks in words needing little comment:

> We are duly impressed by your Excellency's suggestion, that the extension of territorial limits was never contemplated by the framers of the Constitution. If the President and Senate may purchase land, and Congress may plant States in *Louisiana*, they may with equal right establish them on the *North-West Coast*, or in *South-America*. It may be questioned hereafter, whether after this formation of new States, the adherence of the old ones which dissented from the measure, is the result of obligation or expediency. And it is evident, that this multiplication of new States, not parties to the original compact, must soon be regarded as fatal to the rights and liberties of some

[33] The person responsible for this was undoubtedly Josiah Quincy, who had delivered the famous secession speech in Congress when Louisiana was admitted in 1811, and who spoke on this subject also in his Washington Benevolent Society address of April 30, 1813. After having resigned from Congress he became a member of the State Senate elected that month.

of the present members of the confederacy, and consequently as an insupportable grievance. This extension of territory has already excited a spirit of cupidity and speculation, which is among the causes of our present troubles. By means of power thus acquired, and the operation of the Constitutional provision, whereby three freemen in certain parts of the Union enjoy the same privileges in the choice of Representatives, which in other states is divided among five; the influence of *Massachusetts*, and of the Eastern States, in the National Councils, is lost, and systems of commercial restriction, of War, and conquest, fatal to their interests, and outrageous to their feelings, are founded on its ruins.

We are aware that the expression of these truths, which are wrung from us by the tortures of an unfeeling and unmerited policy, will be imputed (by those who are interested in such a construction) to disaffection to the Union. When the public treasure has been lavished by Administration, as the price of fixing upon *Massachusetts* the suspicion and odium of her sister States,[34] calumny acquires an importance, which a House of Representatives may notice without a culpable condescension. It is not true, as your Excellency is aware, that the good people of this Commonwealth, or of the metropolis, cherish views inimical to the continuance of the Union. *Massachusetts* was alert and decided in promoting the old and new Confederations. We remember, also, that under a wise Administration the present Constitution was prolific in every species of prosperity. We know that the affinities of interest, which ought to unite us, are natural, and predominate over the artificial collisions which tend to detach from each other the members of the great family. Nor are our intelligent citizens unmindful of the dangers, dissentions, and final insignificance of the component parts, which too often attend the dissolution of confederated States. But on the other hand, we regard the Union as only *one of the objects* of the Constitution. The others, as expressed in the instrument, are "to establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and posterity." So long as the Union can be made the instrument of these other Constitutional objects, it will deserve the support

[34] A reference to the "Henry Plot."

of all the friends of their country. But it is for these only that it possesses a value in our esteem. Without them, it would prove a name and not a charm, and like other Constitutional provisions, a fair subject of amendment. It was not betraying an indifference to the Union, to protest against measures as weak and mischievous, which their authors afterwards abandoned as mischievous and weak. We have asked for an efficient protection to Commerce, or that Commerce should be permitted to take care of itself. — Neither has been granted. The portion of the Union which lives by Commerce, is plunged into war by those who exult in their means of living without it, claiming, however, to be its best friends, and most competent to its regulation. Thousands, deprived of the means of happiness, which endear either government or country, remonstrate and complain, and are branded as malcontents by those who dispense seizures, forfeitures, penalties and prisons, as bounties for the encouragement and protection of Commerce.[35]

At the close of the year 1813, one more hardship was added to the already extensive list of New England's woes. Contraband trade along the New England coast had assumed such proportions that Congress passed, at the President's suggestion, a general embargo act, far more severe than Jefferson's, absolutely prohibiting the coasting trade, and permitting transportation on inland waterways only by special permission of the President. So rigorously was the embargo enforced that within six weeks the act had to be amended in order to prevent the people of Nantucket from starving.

New England Federalism, then, by the close of the year 1813, had formulated a set of grievances, satisfaction for which would be sought before long. The grievances proceeded from several *idées fixes*, the articles of faith of that persuasion, which we have seen crop out again and again in the letters, speeches, and state papers of Otis and his friends: first, the fetish of commerce, the idea that New

[35] *Centinel*, June 5, 1813.

England depended absolutely and exclusively on commerce for her existence; second, the fear of Democracy; and third, the conviction that the foreign and domestic policy of the Republican party had always been dictated by subserviency to France, hatred of England, and a wish to exalt the planting interests of the South and West over the commercial interests of New England. These ideas were as genuine, as ingrained, in the average New England conscience of 1814 as were, in the South of 1860, a very similar set of pernicious *idées fixes*, which caused that section to secede from the Union. In 1814, the particular grievances of New England, that we have seen developing for the last decade, were, first, the restrictive system of Jefferson, now renewed; second, the loss of political influence by the ready admission of foreigners to franchise and to office, by the admission of new states out of the Louisiana Purchase, and by slave representation; third, and most serious of all, the war.

The Hartford Convention was primarily an attempt to find a permanent solution for these difficulties.

CORRESPONDENCE REGARDING GOVERNMENT LOANS

DAVID PARISH TO OTIS

Philada. the 12th April 1813.

Dear Sir

Your lines of the 14th of March were handed to me by Your Son & I beg leave to assure you that I consider myself under Obligations to you for having procured me his Acquaintance & afforded me an Opportunity of evincing by my Attentions to him the grateful Sense I entertain of the kind reception I met with from you when I visited Boston.

You will probably have been informed that I have taken up the balance of the Loan — having, for some time past had good reason to anticipate pacific dispositions on the part of the Cabinet I was induced to enter very largely into an operation

with which I should have had no concern, if I had not confidently looked forward to a speedy peace. My opinion has always been that it would neither be safe nor good policy to lend the money at all if the war was to be prosecuted & no honest attempt at peace made — in continuing the War the finances of the Country must become so much embarrassed as to endanger the punctual payment of the Interest, and because the continuance of the War might endanger even the principal by producing a dissolution of the Union (altho' I confess I do not think this latter event at all probable) if an *honest* attempt at peace should fail which I do not believe it can do, for I am sure an honorable peace can be made with England whenever we please, the War will become a popular one, and then the resources of the Country are such, as to render the publick Stock an ample Security for the investment of money. I have entered into these details, as I should be extremely sorry that my friends at Boston should for a moment suppose that I had the slightest disposition of contributing my aid for the prosecution of the present ruinous measures.

I am with high Regard Dear Sir Your very Obedt Servt

DAVID PARISH

The Honble H. G. Otis Esqr Boston

JAMES LLOYD ON GOVERNMENT LOANS

[April, 1814] [36]

The only condition on which a purchase of the loan could be at all contemplated, is a knowledge of the state of the pending negotiation, at least so far as relates to the issue of it, — and an entire conviction that this issue would be realized in a pacification the ensuing summer.

The certainty of such a result can only be assured, by information to be communicated by the Secretary of State, or of the Treasury in writing, to some respectable and confidential person (who could have no interest, or views of accomodation distinct from those of the present contractors,) under an in-

[36] The document is in James Lloyd's handwriting, and is endorsed in Otis's hand: "J. L's memorandum of terms on which it would do to take loan." It was undoubtedly presented and adopted at the meeting of Federalist financiers in Boston to consider whether they would subscribe to the loan of 1814.

junction of secrecy so far as regarded details, or particulars; on the following points:—

1st. Whether Messrs. Gallatin, Bayard & Adams, or any one of them, or any other person, has made known to this Government or any of its officers, the basis, or outlines of the principles, upon which an arrangement between the two Countries can be effected, & whether such basis is agreable to the Government, so far as to ensure its acceptance, provided better terms cannot be obtained? — or if this has not been done,

2ndly — What instructions have been given to the Commissioners respecting the claim of Great Britain to search for her seamen on board American Merchant ships, and whether an abandonmt, or suspension of this claim, or the practice under it, is to be insisted on?

3rdly — What instructions have been given respecting those British subjects who may be recognised at sea by the officers of British Ships of War, but who have been regularly naturalised according to law in the United States?

Information on these points being obtained, it will then remain to ascertain, at what rate per centum, and at what periods of payment the loan can be obtained — the contract (if any) to be accompanied with a stipulation on the part of the Government, that if the residue of the loan of 25 millions of dollars, or any part thereof, should be sold at a greater discount, or on a longer period of payment, the same advantages should be extended to these purchasers, or an equivalent be given them in lieu thereof, in case the terms of their contract shall have expired, or been fulfilled. —

CHARLES WILLING HARE TO OTIS

Philadelphia April 13, 1814.

My dear Sir,

I arrived here on Saturday Evening after such a journey as I had never before gone through, bruised very much by the overturning of the Stage, & otherwise beaten almost to a Mummy.

Mr Parish appears to be clearly of opinion, that the Government cannot be induced to give the assurances required by Mr Lloyd, altho' his conviction that peace will soon be made, is daily strengthened. He seems also to think that a great

part if not the whole of the loan may be obtained without his aid or the Boston Cooperation, and he fears that in the event of an Armistice which he deems probable, the contract may be entirely lost, and the terms at least rendered much less favourable. He accedes however fully to the arrangement that nothing be done by either party without notice to the other, and without an opportunity being afforded by each to the other of embracing on equal terms the benefit of any contract which may be made. Of course nothing will be done here until you shall have been fully heard from. You will have observed that the Advertisement of the Secretary of the Treasury limits the time for receiving proposals to the 2nd of May, and it is therefore in every event of great importance that we should receive definite intelligence from you before that time. The points of greatest importance you recollect to be, whether a competition is probable from Mr Grey[37] or any other New England interest, to what amount subscriptions can certainly be obtained at any given rate, and to what amount a circulation of the Stock could be calculated on, indications of a pacific nature being continued by the Government. If positive engagements to a large amount be unattainable, your own well matured opinion as to the safety of the operation will have great weight, and will be received by Mr Parish in the most confidential manner. He will have seen this letter before it will be put into the Post Office, and the sentiments it utters may therefore be considered as meeting his approbation. . . .

CHARLES WILLING HARE TO OTIS

Philadelphia April 26 1814.

My dear Sir,

I had the pleasure this morning of receiving yours of the 22nd which in connection with your letter to Mr H, is very full and apprises me of all it was necessary for me to know. It may be calculated with considerable certainty that on the 2nd of May not more than 4,000,000 of dollars will have been subscribed. What Mr P[arish] will then do is uncertain, tho' relying upon peace & the aid of his European connection, I

[37] William Gray, the wealthy shipowner of Salem, the most generous subscriber to government loans in New England.

think it probable he will finally make the contract. The part I may take will be wholly dependent upon the opinions I may form, with regard to peace, of which however the liberation of hostages affords another & in my mind decisive indication. I shall inform you constantly of what is going forward & pray you to collect and communicate to me all the information you can obtain. Mr. Thorndike will return well disposed to enter upon the operation, and will I have no doubt aid any efforts of yours, in regard to it.

Always affectionately & respectfully Your friend & Servt

C. W. HARE

Honble H. G. Otis Esq.

JOHN LOWELL TO OTIS[38]

Feb. 25 [1823]

Dear Sir,

You see with what promptitude, I offer my opinions — perhaps you will think it too great, but you will at least see in it, the sincerity of my zeal for what I consider not your, but the common cause. Prompt, I must be, because nature made me so. I form my opinions rapidly upon the first presentation of a question. Be it a defect, or not, I can scarcely hope to grow more sage after 53.

There are serious difficulties to my mind as to the insertion of either of these letters. To the insertion of your own, I think, insuperable ones. It will instantly occur to every one that Mr Cabot in his present state of depression — on ye verge of another world, could not have furnished them *both*. It will be suspected, as the letters are *confidential*, that they were furnished by you.

Suppose them, however, *published*. You forget that in fact the Federalists — the opulent members of that party *did*

[38] Written when Otis was Federalist candidate for governor of Massachusetts. He had evidently asked Lowell's advice as to the advisability of publishing a statement, backed up by a letter from George Cabot, that in 1814 he had been in favor of subscribing to the government loan of that year. Otis did not take Lowell's advice, and the statement and letters are published in his *Letters in Defence of the Hartford Convention*, 96. The strength of old Essex Junto feeling, shown in this letter as existing a decade after the war, is extraordinary. The letter is unsigned, but in Lowell's handwriting.

refuse their loans. To shew, that *you* were *then* in favour of them, on grounds certainly defensible, might tend to shew that you was not an opponent to the war à l'outrance — but it will revive one of the most serious charges, among the men, whose influence is the greatest in this, & in all elections, that you were too timid. In truth, for it is my duty to speak plainly on a subject so interesting, not a small portion of the unmerited opposition to you has arisen & you must know it from *warm & ardent federalists*, who have supposed you were not so zealous & consistent as you ought to have been. I need not say, that I have thought these opinions hypocritical [39] but I *do* perceive that the publications of these letters will revive these recollections, and will tend to place you in a state of opposition to Phillips & Eliot & Lyman [40] &c who did not agree to the policy you recommended. The proof of that, is the necessity *you* feel of striking out the parts of Mr C —'s letter included in bracketts.

If he would consent at any rate to its publication I have doubts whether he would agree to suppress those passages — passages so necessary to the vindication of his own principles.

See then, how the question would stand before the Publick. *No* Federalist *did* subscribe — Mr Otis was in favour of it. Mr Otis was therefore more patriotick than his fellows. Yet even *he* did not come out with his 50 or 100,000 dollars, but he *preferred his party to his Country.* I am, now, of course, using the language of Major Orne or of Trecothic Austin.[41]

On the other side, the Merrills & the Saltonstalls will say, Look you, Mr Otis's friends are building up his reputation at the expence of his own party. He was in favour of the later loans & had we joined heart & hand, the Treaty of Ghent would never have been made. Canada would have been taken — the Credit & of course the Pride & Presumption of the Washington Cabinet would have been increased and sustained. I would not write to you at any rate or on any terms, If I did not believe that you had such a *just* conviction of my good wishes that I could not say any thing which could be misapplied or render

[39] Hardly. See below, p. 116.

[40] Probably John Phillips, Samuel Eliot, and Theodore Lyman, all prominent merchants of Boston.

[41] Henry Orne, editor of the Boston *Yankee*, and James T. Austin.

me subject to the slightest suspicion. I can have no interests of any sort which are not closely & intimately allied with ye success of your election, & tho' unaccustomed to compliments I can truly say, that your fame & reputation as a publick man are very dear to me. Yet I entreat you not to place a reliance on the judgment of one — so very prompt & hasty, & who has very little reliance on any thing but his promptitude & political courage, in which he is not willing to yield to anyone.

If it should be thought best by any other to insert an article asserting these facts, I am ready to do it with ye aid of these papers but my own judgment is entirely opposed to any allusion to it. You must rise or fall with ye old Federal party. It is your strongest hold — the only one which can carry you through the hazards of a new Election — an election at a most unfortunate moment — but I think it will succeed & such I find to be the constantly increasing opinion.

I am with great regard
Your friend & Pupil

P S. To shew you, how strongly my opinions are adverse to any allusion to your difference of sentiment as to the War loans, I cannot conceive any *guarded* expression, by which, any partizan of the Federal vote should introduce as a *merit*, your having been *favorable to these loans*, which would not produce the loss of *ten* votes for every *one* gained — & it would do it in the most disastrous, & I know, to you, the most distressing way, by relaxing ye efforts of the best sort of men — not merely the most distinguished ones, but those zealous men of small talents but ardent feelings.

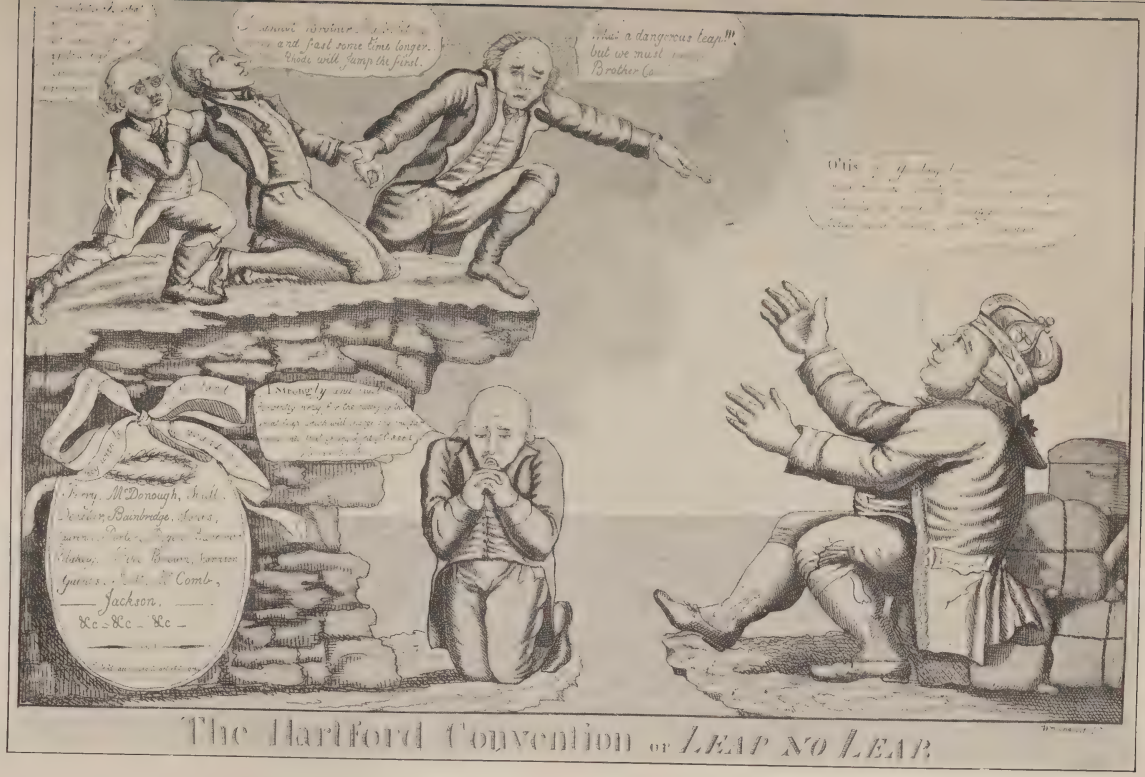
CHAPTER XXII

HARTFORD CONVENTION: I. ORIGIN

1808–1814, ÆT. 43–48

THE Hartford Convention of 1814 was the central event in the life of Harrison Gray Otis, and the one event of primary importance in the history of his country, upon which his influence was undoubtedly greater than that of any other man. Since the Hartford Convention was the result of conditions rather than personalities, it is incorrect to call Otis the "father" of it, as he was popularly supposed to be; but he was, as we have seen, a leader in the sectional policy of Massachusetts Federalism of which that event was the logical result; he wrote a letter to Josiah Quincy, on December 15, 1808, which contains the first known definite proposal of it; and he was chairman of the committee responsible for its summons in 1814. In the Convention itself he was foremost in energy and talents, and was the probable author of its report. In after years, moreover, the burden of its defense against charges of disloyalty fell on him. He wrote, or was directly responsible for, no less than five formal vindications of the Convention,[1] and so often did he refer to it in

[1] (1) *Letters developing the Character and Views of the Hartford Convention, by "One of the Convention."* Washington, 1820. (2) *A Short Account of the Hartford Convention* . . . Boston, 1823. This was written on behalf of Otis's candidacy for the governorship, by Theodore Lyman, Jr., son of one of Otis's most intimate friends, and must have been directly inspired by him. (3) *Otis' Letters in defence of the Hartford Convention and the People of Massachusetts*, Boston, 1824. The most elaborate of his defenses. (4) An "Appeal to the Citizens of the United States," in *Correspondence between J. Q. Adams . . . and several Citizens of Massachusetts* . . . Boston, 1829, reprinted in H. Adams,



CONTEMPORARY CARICATURE OF THE HARTFORD CONVENTION

The figure kneeling below the cliff is meant for Timothy Pickering; the one just above him, for Otis.

his speeches and letters that John Quincy Adams said with truth, "Whatever subject brings him before the public, his exhibition always ends with a defence of the Hartford Convention."[2] In short, no name is so closely connected with the history of that much-abused and altogether unfortunate body as that of Harrison Gray Otis.

It is therefore necessary for a biographer of Otis to enter somewhat at length into the causes, incidents, and results of the Hartford Convention of 1814. That has always been a subject fascinating to students of United States history. An air of mystery was imparted to the Convention by the secrecy of its proceedings, and the abrupt change of affairs brought about by the announcement of peace, only a month after the Convention adjourned, opens up a realm of endless conjecture as to the probable course of New England Federalism had the war continued.

Otis always insisted that the Convention was popular in its origin and conception, that its objects were to soothe the popular excitement, provide for the defense of New England against British invaders, and save the Union; and that its leaders represented "whatever of moral, intellectual, or patriotic worth is to be found in the character of the New England community." His most able and eminent critic, John Quincy Adams, summing up the belief of the triumphant war party of 1815, declared that the Convention was a conspiracy in its origin and conception, that its members were desperate political gamblers seeking only their personal advancement, that its objects were to inflame popular excitement, provide for organized resistance against the national government,

N. E. Federalism no. VIII, is probably written by Otis. (5) A brief statement of the origin of the Convention, in a letter to Mrs. Willard, published in her *History of the United States;* reprinted in H. S. Randall, *Jefferson,* III, 418, n.

[2] *N. E. Federalism,* 231.

and break up the Union; in a word that the Hartford Convention was "unconstitutional and treasonable, . . . wholly abnormal, hideous, and wicked." [3] My aim has been, not to establish the truth of Otis's dicta, but to find out from contemporary sources where the Convention project originated, what Otis and his party expected to accomplish by it, and what they actually did accomplish — questions to which no definite answers have yet been given by historians.

The Hartford Convention was a normal product of abnormal conditions. When a sectional minority, conscious of grave oppression from the national government, desires to recover its supposed rights by some method short of secession, what more effective method of airing its grievances and formulating its demands could be found, than the summons of a convention of delegates from the oppressed states?

This was the traditional American method for securing changes or reforms in government. The Congress of Albany in 1754, the Stamp Act Congress of 1765, the First Continental Congress of 1774, were all conventions of delegates, seeking redress for sectional oppression within the British Empire. During the Revolution, three New England conventions had been called, at New Haven in 1779, and at Boston and Hartford in 1780,[4] in order to supplement and enforce legislation for which the Continental Congress was incompetent; — and one of the subsidiary objects of the Hartford Convention, as we shall see, was to supplement the work of defending

[3] Henry Cabot Lodge's able summary (*Cabot*, 413) of John Quincy Adams's "Reply to the Appeal of the Massachusetts Federalists." (*N. E. Federalism*, no. x).

[4] The proceedings of the Hartford Convention of 1780 are printed in the *Magazine of American History*, VIII, 688; those of the Boston Convention of 1780 have been published separately. (F. B. Hough, ed., Albany, 1867.)

New England, for which Congress was supposed to be incompetent. Furthermore, it was a convention of delegates at Annapolis, in 1786, that recommended sweeping changes in the national compact, and a similar body that drew up the present constitution in 1787. References to these events, as precedents for the Hartford Convention, frequently appeared in Federalist speeches and writings of 1814.[5]

In addition to a general consciousness of oppression, we always find a particular and seemingly intolerable grievance when sectional conventions are suggested. In 1808 a majority of the people of New England for the first time were conscious of oppression and of an intolerable grievance, — Jefferson's embargo, — and it was just after the presidential election had failed to right their section's wrongs that we find Otis, and several other Federalist leaders, proposing to hold a Northern convention. This proposition never went beyond the pale of private discussion; but had the embargo remained after March, 1809, there is every probability that Massachusetts would have called a New England or Northern convention with the object of securing a concerted nullification of the embargo by the disaffected states, and amendments to the Constitution protecting commercial interests in the future. The Hartford Convention was simply the result of a similar situation arising in New England during the War of 1812. Like conditions in other sections than New England, produced like results. The now forgotten Nashville Convention of 1850[6] was

[5] E.g., Noah Webster's speech on Otis's Fifth Resolution, in Boston *Weekly Messenger*, November 4, 1814; memoirs of Daniel A. White in *Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc.*, VI, 288.

[6] H. V. Ames, *State Docs. on Fed. Relations*, no. V, 32, no. VI, 22; Jos. Hodgson, *Cradle of the Confederacy*, 278; article by F. Newberry in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, XI, 259.

a Southern replica of the Hartford Convention. First proposed in 1844, to express the Southern demand for the annexation of Texas, it was called in 1850, to formulate Southern ideas on the territorial question. Some fifty delegates, elected in part by state legislatures, were present from nine states, and the President of the Convention declared in his opening address that it was called "not to prevent, but to perpetuate, the Union." It drew up an address to the people, and a set of resolutions dictating a certain policy to Congress, which were rendered abortive by the Compromise of 1850, just as the Report of the Hartford Convention was nullified by the Peace of Ghent. Though denounced at the time, notably by Daniel Webster in his seventh of March speech, as a secessionist organization, the Nashville Convention was soon forgotten in the rapid march of events; whereas the Hartford Convention, as the conspicuous culmination of a sectional movement, became the target of national obloquy for the next thirty-five years.

During the War of 1812, there were three distinct movements for a Northern convention, more or less connected, before it was summoned by Otis's committee in the October, 1814, session of the General Court. The first, assuming it to be directed toward this end, was the state convention project in Massachusetts, of July and August, 1812, which we have just examined. Contemporaneous with it was a movement begun and carried on in New York, almost single-handed, by Gouverneur Morris, who shared the beliefs and prejudices of the most violent New England Federalists. Six weeks before the declaration of war, Morris proposed to De Witt Clinton that all the states north of the Potomac appoint delegates to a convention, which "will readily take the ground no longer to allow a representation of slaves; that this

geographical division will terminate the political divisions which now prevail, and give a new object to men's minds; that the Southern States must then either submit to what is just or break up the Union."[7] Again, on August 20, 1812, we find him writing a friend, "You may, I think, count on a Convention of delegates from the States east of Pennsylvania. This Convention . . . will, I think, determine to have peace."[8] The project next appears in a lengthy state paper, drawn up by Morris early in 1813, and submitted to his nephew, David B. Ogden, the chairman of the committee on the state of the nation in the New York Assembly.[9] This document violently condemns Madison's war, slave representation, and Southern hostility to commerce and partiality to France. It defends the Orders in Council, impressment, and the Massachusetts view of the militia question; it denounces "hewing new states out of the forest South and West of the old Union," and culminates in a proposition "That delegates be appointed to meet at the City of New York on the Day of next, with such Delegates as may be sent by States who have

[7] A. C. Morris, *Diary and Letters of Gouverneur Morris*, II, 541.

[8] To Benj. R. Morgan, J. Sparks, *Morris*, III, 274. On the previous day a mass meeting of Federalists in New York City, at which Morris was present, issued a call for a Federalist state convention, the delegates of which were to "*coöperate with the Friends of Peace in our sister States*, in devising and pursuing such constitutional measures as may secure our independence, and preserve our union; both of which are endangered by the present war." This statement certainly suggests that the state convention was intended to carry out Morris's Northern convention scheme; but there is no mention of any such project in Rufus King's correspondence or diary. The latter indeed, suggests (*King*, v, 267) that the object of this resolution was to secure common action for the approaching presidential election. The New York State Convention was held, but no trace of an intention to call a Northern convention appears in its resolutions (New York *Evening Post*, September 25, 1812). Possibly if the proposed Massachusetts Convention had been held, the two would have coöperated to bring it about.

[9] The original is in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Cf. *King*, v, 296.

elected a majority of Congressional Representatives favorable to Peace and Commerce, for the Purpose of considering the Condition of public Affairs and devising Measures to obtain Redress." In other words, it enumerates the historic Federalist grievances, and proposes the remedy ultimately chosen by the New England section of the party.

Morris wished to have this paper presented to the Assembly as the Committee's report, but his nephew refused to agree, possibly because no such scheme could be adopted while the war party controlled the State Senate and the governorship. But Gouverneur Morris had hopes of a Federalist landslide in the spring elections, and a few days before they took place, he sought support for the convention project outside his state, frankly declaring his object to be secession, in the following portion of a letter to Harrison Gray Otis, dated April 29, 1813:

> With a Preview of present Circumstances, and as the due Preparation for them, it was my anxious Wish to produce a cordial Union with the Eastern States; and I suffered much to see that cunning Faction kept us so widely apart. I flatter myself that the Result of our present Election will bind us closely together. If we carry our men by a good Majority, it will (I trust) be an early object to have *a Convention of Representatives from States the Friends of Peace and Commerce.* It is for such a Convention, and not for a solitary Individual, to mark out a Course of Conduct. If good Men be selected they will doubtless propose such Measures as, being generally adopted, will prove effectual. In the meantime, it might not be amiss that some of your able Writers should examine the Question freely Whether it be for the Interest or conducive to the Happiness or consistent with the Freedom of the Northern and Eastern States to continue in Union with the Owners of Slaves.[10]

[10] From the original, in the Otis MSS. Part of the letter is printed in Sparks, *Morris*, III, 291, although the secession portion is discreetly omitted.

One would like to know what Otis thought of this proposition, and what reply, if any, he made to Morris. Unfortunately there is no clue to either point. A few days after the letter was written, all chance of a Northern convention originating in New York was lost by a Democratic victory in the state elections. But to the end of the war Gouverneur Morris continued to urge secession in letters to Otis, Rufus King, and others, and he was exceedingly disgusted at the moderation of the Hartford Convention.

The knowledge that the distinguished New Yorker would support Massachusetts may have influenced slightly Otis's course during the year 1814; but the facts point to another source than Gouverneur Morris for the Hartford Convention. The real impulse that produced this event came from "Old Hampshire," as a result of one more encumbrance being added to New England's already heavy burden — Madison's embargo of December 10, 1813. Had the President wished to turn New England's disaffection into sedition, he could not have chosen a better method; for the very word embargo was a red rag to Massachusetts Federalism. It cut off the only legitimate commerce that remained, and ended the extensive smuggling over the Canadian frontier, the profits of which had reconciled many a Federalist to the war. The towns of Massachusetts, remembering how they had killed Jefferson's embargo, were not slow to act. When the General Court assembled in 1814 for its January session, urgent petitions that recalled the early days of 1809, began to pour in from all parts of the Commonwealth. The tone of each was ominous. There was no trace of animosity against Great Britain, but every sentence expressed hatred of the administration and a determination to submit to its "tyranny" no longer.

Thirty-nine of these memorials, all adopted in legal town meetings, were forwarded to the General Court during January and February.[11] Of these, eleven were from the District of Maine, where Democracy was strong, but the pinch of war and embargo even stronger. Sixteen came from the Connecticut River counties ("Old Hampshire"), and ten of these, with one from Worcester County, ended their resolutions in words somewhat like the following:

> Your memorialists presume not to dictate the course to be pursued; but respectfully suggest, that a convention of deputies from the Northern and commercial states to deliberate at the present gloomy crisis upon the interests of those states and to propose amendments to the constitution for the security of those interests, might remedy or mitigate the evils under which the country is now bitterly suffering.[12]

In these eleven town resolutions, the project of a Northern convention is mentioned for the first time outside private correspondence. The fact that all but one came from Old Hampshire, suggests a common origin. Noah Webster, the lexicographer, then prominent in local Federalist politics at Amherst, afterwards furnished the

[11] The originals are in the Massachusetts Archives, Senate Files, 4820. A good example is the memorial of Belfast, Maine, in part as follows:

Resolved — that the sufferings, the Injuries, and oppressions of the Inhabitants of the District of Maine under the present Dynasty, are tenfold greater than those which occasioned the seperation of the colonies from Great Britain; and, tho' we have discovered more patience, we ought not to possess less fortitude than our Fathers displayed in their declaration of independence. —

Resolved — that we hold in the utmost contempt the "Tory" doctrine of "non resistance and passive obedience," so warmly espoused by the advocates of the measures of the present administration.

Resolved — should the "Conscription" law, contemplated by the Military Committee of Congress be enacted, that we hold ourselves bound to protect, at all hazards, the rights of our Citizens against its oppressive and unconstitutional provisions. . . .

Resolved — that the Militia of New England, an impenetrable phalanx of citizen-soldiers, are the best guarantee of our political and commercial rights; and will form in the Field, a counterpoise to the mushroom states in the Senate.

[12] Memorial of Hadley, January 26, 1814, Senate Files, 4820.36.

key by disclosing a circular letter drawn up at a meeting of leading Old Hampshire Federalists at Northampton on January 19, 1814.[13] The circular, copies of which were sent to the authorities of every town in Old Hampshire, declares

> that the evils we suffer are not wholly of a temporary nature, springing from the war, but some of them are of a permanent character, resulting from a perverse construction of the Constitution of the United States. . . . We would invite our fellow citizens to consider, whether peace will remedy our public evils, without some amendments of the Constitution, which shall secure to the Northern States, their due weight and influence in our national councils. . . . If our fellow citizens should concur with us in opinion, we would suggest, whether it would not be expedient for the people in town meetings to address memorials to the General Court at their present session, petitioning that honorable body to propose a convention of all the Northern and Commercial States, by delegates to be appointed by their respective legislatures, to consult upon measures in concert, for procuring such alterations in the federal constitution as will give to the Northern States, a due proportion of representation, and secure them from the future exercise of powers injurious to their commercial interests.[14]

This private meeting in Northampton was the first definite step towards the long dreamed of Northern convention, and the town meetings held at its instigation first brought the idea before the people of New England. There is every indication that the action of the Northampton Federalists, whose originality we have already noted on two separate occasions, was spontaneous. Noah Webster asserted that "not one person in Boston had any concern in these proposals," a statement in which Otis

[13] *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, IX, 101; cf. S. G. Goodrich, *Recollections*, II, 19–24. The meeting was called by Joseph Lyman, a leader in the Old Hampshire Conventions of 1809 and 1812, "for the purpose of a free and dispassionate discussion touching our public concerns."

[14] Goodrich, II, 21–22.

concurred. "If I had been hanged as a ringleader, you and your friends had been bound in honor to maintain my family," he wrote Webster facetiously, many years later.[15] Timothy Pickering, for instance, knew nothing of the Northampton movement until it was made public.[16] It is improbable, moreover, that the Northampton Federalists were influenced by, or had even heard of, Gouverneur Morris's plan. All except Noah Webster were comparatively obscure men, and none were correspondents of Morris. They were simply proposing a traditional remedy for sectional oppression.

It was only by the exercise of commendable restraint and moderation on the part of Otis, Quincy, and Lloyd, that the General Court was prevented from adopting an attitude of open hostility toward the Union during this winter session of 1814. The inflammatory petitions from their constituents seemed to indicate a popular demand for extreme measures.[17] Timothy Pickering, stung by the sneers of his opponents at Washington, to the effect that Massachusetts might bluster, but dared not act, was spurring on his followers.[18] Charles Willing Hare, of Philadelphia, was writing Otis in favor of provocative legislation.[19] In the legislature itself the more violent Federalists proposed laws that would certainly have

[15] May 6, 1840. Noah Webster MSS.

[16] The first mention since 1809 of a New England Convention in Pickering's correspondence is in a letter to Samuel Putnam of February 4, 1814, some time after the Northampton meeting. "Ought there not to be a proposal of a convention from these six states?" he asks as if the thought had just occurred to him. *N. E. Federalism*, 393.

[17] The war press sneered at the "contemptible minority" of towns petitioning against war and embargo, but though every effort was made by the war party to secure counter-petitions in support of the administration policy, only two or three were presented. *Chronicle*, February 21, 1814.

[18] The correspondence in the Pickering MSS. between Pickering and Samuel Putnam, State Senator from Essex County, is most illuminating. It is partially printed in *N. E. Federalism*, 391–93, and H. C. Lodge, *Cabot*, 530–33.

[19] See his letter of February 10, 1814 in chap. XXVIII.

brought the state into armed conflict with the national government. Senator Blake of Worcester, delivering a glowing eulogy of Great Britain, declared that if our constitution permitted embargoes, he preferred the British constitution, "monarchy and all." [20] Samuel Fessenden announced that "it was time to take our rights into our own hands. We ought to pass a law prohibiting any person stopping vessels going from one point or to another—that we ought to establish a Custom-House by law, and the sooner we come at issue with the general government the better." [21]

A Federalist who heard this speech, afterwards wrote:

> However incredible it may seem, these ravings of a political maniac were received with manifest applause. This gentleman had been encouraged, doubtless, to believe that he should be sustained by the leaders of the Federal party at headquarters. But Mr. Harrison Gray Otis, who was a very wise man, and without the slightest taste for political martyrdom, rose immediately after, and dispelled the illusion. He had listened, with great pleasure, to the stirring eloquence of his friend from Maine. He admired the spirit, by which he had been actuated; but he thought we were not yet ready to proceed to those extremities, indicated by his honorable friend.[22]

Otis's stand against this imprudent proposal, which after all went no further than the suggestions in many of the town memorials, was typical of his policy throughout.[23] A quarter of a century later he wrote of this session:

[20] Boston *Yankee* (the only paper publishing the debates of this session), January 28, 1814.

[21] Boston *Yankee*. Fessenden, the father of William Pitt Fessenden, represented the town of New Gloucester, Maine, a rabid Federalist community. He was a typical radical, and later became one of William Lloyd Garrison's earliest converts.

[22] "Sigma" (L. M. Sargent), *Reminiscences of Samuel Dexter* (1857), 79.

[23] *N. E. Federalism*, 392; Pickering MSS., xv, 12. Both Pickering and C. W. Hare (see his first letter in chap. xxviii) approved of Fessenden's proposition, and Putnam wrote Pickering that a committee of the State Senate was about to recommend a similar measure. Lodge, *Cabot*, 533.

The leading members in the legislature had on hand an embarrassing task. It was impossible for them to say " thus far may ye come but no further," without refrigerating the popular zeal in opposition to the ruinous system of Govemt. Nor could they sustain the petitions and predicate upon them legislative resolutions without encouraging expectations of relief sought by the petitioners, which could not be afforded by the Legislature, unless by avowed *nullification;* for which those leading persons were by no means prepared or desirous.[24]

Otis and the moderates succeeded not only in quashing nullification, but in postponing the Northern convention. Their policy of cautious moderation is expressed in a committee report on the town memorials, which was scouted by the Essex Federalists as inadequate to the occasion.[25] Lloyd's Report, as it was called from the name of the committee's chairman, enumerates the grievances complained of in the town memorials: the "admission and multiplication of new states, not contemplated by the parties to the Constitution, and not warranted by its principles," the war, the embargo, — "an act more unfeeling and odious than the Boston port bill, which aroused the colonies into independence." Declaring the embargo to be palpably unconstitutional and void, it asserts, in Madison's language of 1798, the right of a state to "interpose its power, and wrest from the oppressor his victim." Three modes of relief, it states, have been suggested by the petitioning towns. First, a remonstrance to Congress, which the committee "cannot recommend. It has been again and again resorted to, and with no other effect than to increase the eviis complained of; and to subject to unjust reproaches and insinuations,

[24] Otis to Noah Webster, May 6, 1840. Webster MSS.

[25] Hildreth, *United States,* VI, 473; Lodge, *Cabot,* 533. The most essential portions of the report, with bibliography, are printed in H. V. Ames, *State Docs.,* no. II, 25–31.

a body, which ought never to be a suppliant to any power on earth." Second, the passage of laws nullifying the embargo, or penalizing its enforcement. The committee believes the embargo already void, and penalties inadequate.[26] Third, a Northern convention "to obtain such amendments or explanations of the Constitution, as will secure them from future evils."

On the subject of a convention, the committee observe, that they entertain no doubt of the right of the Legislature to invite other states to a convention. . . . We know of no surer or better way to prevent that hostility to the Union, the result of oppression, which will eventually terminate in its downfall, than for the Wise and Good, of those states, which deem themselves oppressed, to assemble with delegated authority, and to propose, urge, and even insist upon such explicit declarations of power, or restriction, as will prevent the most hardy from any future attempts to oppress, under the color of the Constitution. [But the committee consider it inexpedient to take so important a step without again consulting their constituents.] The representatives who are soon to be returned for the next General Court, will come from the People, still more fully possessed of their views and wishes as to the all-important subject of obtaining, by further compact engrafted into the present constitution, a permanent security against future abuse of power; and of seeking effectual redress for the grievances and oppressions now endured.

Lloyd's Report was adopted in the House by a vote of 178 to 43 on February 18, 1814, and in the Senate four days later, by a vote of 23 to 8.[27] It was then submitted to the people, as the platform of the Federal party in the spring elections.

[26] Cf. Hare's letter of February 10, in chap. xxviii.

[27] The yeas and nays are recorded in the Appendix to the (MS.) House Journal, xxxiv, and (MS.) Senate Journal, xxxiv, 391. They differ very slightly from the final vote on calling the Hartford Convention in October, 1814. The minority in the Senate represented Middlesex, Norfolk, and all Maine counties except Cumberland.

John Quincy Adams, and other assailants of the Hartford Convention, always referred its origin to a conspiracy, sprung upon the people against their will, and representing but a "feeble minority." Otis and the defenders asserted, on the contrary, that the movement was popular in its origin, and was "postponed for twelve months, by influence of those who now sustain the odium of the measure." [28] The reader will be able to judge which assertion was correct. Thirty-nine towns had petitioned the General Court to restore their commercial rights by immediate action. Eleven towns expressly recommended a New England convention. Instead of obeying this call immediately, or taking the even more radical measures suggested, Otis and his fellow leaders submitted the plan that Adams supposed had been the object of their pursuit for the last ten years, to the hazard of a general election.

[28] H. S. Randall, *Jefferson*, III, 418 n.

CHAPTER XXIII

HARTFORD CONVENTION: II. THE SUMMONS

MAY–DECEMBER, 1814, ÆT. 48–49

So strongly had the sentiment against war and embargo shown itself throughout the state by the spring of 1814, that the Massachusetts Democrats dared not go before the people on a platform of unqualified support of Madison's policy. They nominated for governor Samuel Dexter, who in an open letter, proclaiming himself still a Federalist, announced that on the policy of commercial restriction "he differs radically from the party called republican, and *he chooses that they should know it*," and that the only point on which he differed from the Federalists was their indiscriminate opposition to the war, especially their convention project.[1] Thus the sole issue of the campaign was the attitude to be observed by Massachusetts toward the war. Should she bury her old grievances, and support the administration, or should she strengthen her opposition by calling a Northern convention? Every man, whether Federalist or Republican, who did not believe in the latter course, presumably voted for Dexter. And the outcome showed that the anti-conventionists were in a decided minority. Caleb Strong was reëlected by a plurality of 10,421,[2] — slightly

[1] *Mr. Dexter's Address to the Electors of Massachusetts;* also in newspapers.

[2] W. Burdick, *Massachusetts Manual*, 28. Cf. the votes of 1812–1815;

	Federalist	Democratic
1812	Strong, 52696	Gerry, 51326
1813	" 56754	Varnum, 42789
1814	" 56374	Dexter, 45953
1815	" 50921	" 43938

less than in 1813, but far greater than any previous Federalist plurality since 1803. In the election of Representatives to the General Court but thirteen towns in the state changed their politics, with each party gaining eight members from the other.[3] Three hundred and sixty Federalists, all presumably instructed to vote for a Northern convention, and only one hundred and fifty-six Democrats, were elected to the House of Representatives. Practically every Federalist who stood for reëlection, even such violent men as Samuel Fessenden and Francis Blake, succeeded.

One is impressed with the large number of notable persons on the Federalist side in this General Court of 1814, and with the strong representation of the ruling aristocracy. Among the Boston Senators and Representatives, for instance, were Otis's old friends William Sullivan and Thomas H. Perkins; Josiah Quincy, Israel Thorndike, Daniel Sargent, Benjamin Russell (the editor of the *Centinel*), and Lemuel Shaw, the future Chief Justice. Essex County sent members of the Putnam, Saltonstall, Little, Derby, Pickman, and Rantoul families; from Middlesex came a Bigelow, a Moors, a Fiske, and a Lawrence; and from Old Hampshire came Dwights, Lymans, Lathrops, Strongs, and Elijah H. Mills and Noah Webster. The Democratic members were, on the whole, as inferior in ability and in standing as they were in numbers; but among them was a group of brilliant young men, like Samuel Hoar, Levi Lincoln, Jr., John

[3] These figures were obtained by a comparison of the lists of members in Burdick's *Mass. Manuals* for 1813 and 1814. Eight towns, represented by eight members, that were Democratic in 1813 went Federalist in 1814, and five towns, also represented by eight members, turned from Federalist to Democratic. Most of the changes were in Maine. The General Court of 1814–15 was smaller than that of 1813–14, which sent 417 Federalists and 204 Democrats; the Federalists thus lost 57 members by the failure of towns to send representatives, and the Democrats lost 48.

Holmes, and Albion K. Parris, who were just beginning their political careers. Otis was reëlected for his thirteenth consecutive term, and returned again to the Senate. Other honors came to him this year, besides his membership in the Hartford Convention. The Governor appointed him judge of the Boston Court of Common Pleas, and Harvard College gave him the degree of LL.D. At Commencement he shared this last honor with Judge Isaac Parker, one of the three justices who advised Governor Strong to disobey the President's militia orders, with John Lowell, the inflammatory pamphleteer, and with Chief Justice Tilghman of Pennsylvania, who had upheld the rights of his state against the United States Supreme Court. Harvard College evidently wished to honor the exponents of state sovereignty.

Before the General Court assembled for its spring session, Congress repealed Madison's embargo, thus removing the immediate grievance which the Northern convention was intended to remedy. The Federalist leaders again seized an opportunity to defer the use of a weapon that they considered justified only by strict necessity. Governor Strong's opening address of May 30, and the replies of both Houses, showed a conciliatory disposition;[4] the short spring session passed off uneventfully; and to all appearances the Northern convention was indefinitely postponed.

In all probability this would have been the case, had not the summer and autumn of 1814 developed a situa-

[4] The governor remarked that the repeal of the embargo "must afford peculiar satisfaction to the people of this State, as it seems to indicate a milder and more pacific disposition in the Government." The House "hail it as the harbinger of a better day, auspicious to the interests of commerce." Both express their opinion that the downfall of Bonaparte will induce Madison to make a sincere effort to obtain peace. *Resolves of Mass.*, 1812–15, pp. 483–97.

tion infinitely more critical and alarming to New England than that of the previous winter. The British government, relieved in Europe by the collapse of Napoleon and the Peace of Paris, prepared to overwhelm its only remaining enemy by invasions and raids at every vulnerable point of the coast and frontier. Hitherto New England had not been invested by sea, but by June, 1814, British men-of-war had blockaded her ports, and commenced to make descents on various points along her coast. Moose Island and Eastport were captured on July 11, and the inhabitants forced to take an oath of allegiance to King George. One British invasion was forestalled at Lundy's Lane and Fort Erie, in July and early August, but the last week of August and the first week of September brought a series of military and naval disasters. On August 24, the Boston papers announced that a great British fleet had appeared in Chesapeake Bay. Two days later it was known that the enemy was moving on Washington. On the 29th came news that the inhabitants of Democratic Nantucket, on the point of starvation, had declared neutrality during the remainder of the war. On the 30th and 31st came details of the battle of Bladensburg, the complete rout of the Maryland and Virginia militia, the capture of Washington, and the disgraceful burning of the Capitol. The capitulation of Alexandria was announced on Saturday, September 3, and on the following day Sir George Prevost invaded New York at Lake Champlain, with the finest British army ever sent to America. On the same day it became definitely known in Boston that a naval force under General Sherbrooke had captured Castine and Belfast, and taken formal possession of Maine as far as the Penobscot River. Governor Strong soon heard from a creditable source that Sherbrooke's expedition would

proceed shortly to an attack on Boston, and that a corps of British veterans was then embarking in England for the same object.[5]

With the Federal government bankrupt and fugitive from its capital, national integrity threatened at every point, the regular army undermined by desertion and the scarcity of recruits, and the states forced to provide for their own defense, the Union has never been so weak, or national prestige so low, as in this first week of September, 1814.[6] Most ominous was the increasing disaffection in New England that these events produced. New England, more exposed by her long seacoast than any other section of the country, very naturally began to question, when left by Madison's administration to her fate, the value of a constitution that permitted a national administration to destroy her commerce, lead her into an unjust war, and then neglect her defense. There was a certain rough retribution, it is true, in this sad plight. It was largely due to New England's obstinacy on the militia question. "You complain that Massachusetts is left defenceless," said John Holmes, the Democratic leader in the State Senate. "You took the defense of the State out of the hands of the general government. You would not permit them to decide on the danger. You refused them the means to repel it, and now, forsooth, you complain that you are left *defenceless*."[7] Although the Secretary of War offered to maintain the Massachusetts militia if it were placed under the command of officers in the regular army,

[5] J. Whipple to Governor Strong, September 10, 1814. Mass. Archives, Papers accompanying chap. 86, Resolves of 1814. Thomas Harris, *Life of Commodore Bainbridge*, 187; William Sullivan, *Public Men*, 356; L. M. Sargent, *Samuel Dexter*, 79.

[6] H. Adams, *United States*, VIII, 212–20.

[7] Boston *Patriot*, October 22, 1814.

Governor Strong refused to acquiesce, still fearing that the militia, once under national authority, would be marched off to Canada. Similar offers from the War Department to Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Vermont, met with similar refusals.[8] Under these circumstances the department naturally refused to maintain the militia. It was unreasonable, further, for the New England States to expect an administration that could not defend its own capital to line the New England coast with regulars. But the War Department weakened its own case by yielding to a similar local prejudice in New York, in giving up the command of the city district to Governor Tompkins[9]; and New England Federalism, in September, 1814, was long past the point of examining judicially a question of state rights. In all the disputes in our history between a state and the United States, the smaller party has never paid much attention to the national side of the argument. Massachusetts knew that she had paid

[8] Ames, *State Docs.*, no. II, 15–21.

[9] *King*, v, 426; Hildreth, *United States*, VI, 516, 531. It seems to me that the administration party could have reconciled New England to the war, early in September, 1814, either by yielding on this point, as it finally did early in 1815, or by appointing some able war Federalist, like Rufus King, to a Cabinet position. The opportunity occurred when Monroe was transferred to the War Department after the evacuation of Washington. The *Centinel* proposed, in an editorial of August 31, a thorough reorganization of the Cabinet, with Rufus King, Langdon Cheves, John Brooks, and James Lloyd as Secretaries of State, of the Treasury, of War, and of the Navy. It remarked, "In this time of peril to their country, there is no doubt that these gentlemen would put their shoulders to the wheel. The Administration then would unite the *whole* American people; and under the Aegis of Union the War would be conducted to glorious issue." On September 3, the *Patriot*, a leading administration journal of Boston, proposed substantially the same plan, without mentioning names. The appointment of Brooks or Lloyd to Cabinet positions would have been questionable, but Rufus King who had repeatedly expressed his determination to support the war since it had become defensive, would have made an admirable Secretary of State. His appointment would have reconciled all but the most extreme Federalists to the administration. Soon after this (e.g., *Centinel*, September 7), the Federalist journals raised their demands, and began to print communications calling on Madison to yield his own office to Rufus King.

more war taxes than any other state of the Union, and furnished more troops by voluntary enlistment than any, save one. To be told that she must provide, in addition, the money and men for her own defense, because her governor resisted "unconstitutional" demands of the national executive, seemed the last straw. Clearly the time had come for the "Wise and Good of those States, which deem themselves oppressed, to assemble with delegated authority." On September 7, 1814, Governor Strong took the first step in this direction, and summoned the General Court to a special session on October 5, that such measures might be "adopted, as in their judgment the present dangerous state of public affairs may render expedient."

Even in this hour of danger, a good proportion of the Boston Federalists were so blinded by their prejudices as to neglect the ordinary duty of local defense. Down to September 1, Governor Strong and the State Committee on Defense did nothing, beyond calling out the militia, to prepare for the expected British invasion. Prominent Boston Federalists were frequently heard to say that nothing ought to be done, that the town ought to capitulate if attacked, since the magnanimous British would respect private property.[10] Finally some of the younger men of the party, disgusted with the apathy of their elders, took matters into their own hands, and had a town meeting called for September 3, to consider the adoption of measures for local defense. It would be a pleasure to find Otis employing his eloquence at the head of this movement, but he took at first an entirely opposite course. As

[10] L. M. Sargent, *Samuel Dexter*, 79–83, and a letter of P. P. T. Degrand, a Boston Democrat, to John Quincy Adams, October 16, 1814 (Adams MSS., "Gen. Corr., J. Q. A., 1814–15," 93). These, with the *Boston Town Records, 1814–22*, 17–19, are the sources of my statements regarding events in Boston early in September.

chairman of a Federalist committee appointed to digest a party programme for the town meeting, he urged resolutions simply approving what Governor Strong had done, or rather had not done. At the meeting itself he supported the same policy, in spite of having received a letter from his friend Commodore Bainbridge, urging the instant strengthening of the harbor fortifications.[11]

This town meeting of September 3 was a memorable affair. Samuel Dexter attacked the resolutions offered by Otis, and accused his former colleague of giving aid and comfort to the enemy by his factious opposition to the war. Otis replied with a personal attack on Dexter for his apostasy to Federalism, upon which Mr. Dexter audibly expressed his desire to pull Mr. Otis's nose. Only with some difficulty were these pillars of the state restrained from disgracing themselves and Fanueil Hall by a personal encounter. The meeting finally adopted Otis's resolutions, which made a slight concession to patriotism by promising that the citizens of Boston would aid, by manual labor and pecuniary contributions, in promoting any measure of defense which might be "devised by the proper authority."

On Sunday, September 4, the day after the town meeting, news arrived in Boston which changed Federalist submissiveness into determination to defend the town. The citizens of Alexandria, Virginia, a place as strongly Federalist as Boston itself, after surrendering their town to the enemy in the hope of having their private property

[11] Harris, *Bainbridge*, 193. But as the meeting took place at 10 A.M., and the letter is dated the same day, it is probable that Otis did not receive it until afterwards. Harris says that Otis, "to his honour be it said, warmly participated in the discussion of the day, and by his eloquence infused such zeal into the breasts of his auditory, as to cause them to adopt, without hesitation, the salutary measures recommended by the patriotic Bainbridge." Unfortunately, the testimony of Sargent, Degrand, and the town records show that this statement is incorrect.

spared, had been forced to give up all their shipping, merchandise, flour, and tobacco. This event completely dispelled the illusions of Boston Federalism as to British magnanimity. The State Committee on Defense, to which Otis was shortly appointed, immediately adopted the system recommended by Commodore Bainbridge, and every one, without distinction of party, coöperated to make it effective. Individuals, organizations, and near-by towns vied with one another in offering their services. In the official statement of voluntary labor on the fortifications,[12] we find the Hibernian Society and the Suffolk Bar, Importers of English Goods and the African Society, Bishop Cheverus's Congregation and Harvard students, all working side by side. Captain Stewart, of the *Constitution*, afterwards said "he never saw more determined resolution of resistance than was exhibited by the people of Boston. Men of the first respectability, some among the proscribed traitors,[13] working, with their coats off, like common laborers." [14]

Meanwhile the date set by Governor Strong for the special session of the General Court, October 5, 1814, was fast approaching. Before it arrived (wrote Otis a quarter-century later to Noah Webster), —

> One, or more meetings were held in Boston of a few influential members of the Legislature, to digest some project for the action of that body so that the Session might not on the one hand end in abortion nor on the other produce violent measures. At this meeting, it was found and agreed that the sentiments of our country friends predominated in favor of a convention of the New England States, *and upon the faith of that persuasion* it was determined to coöperate with them in pro-

[12] *Centinel*, October 15, 1814.

[13] I.e. members of the Hartford Convention.

[14] Joseph Hopkinson to Otis, February 15, 1829, quoting a conversation with Stewart.

moting it, and to use it as a medium for obtaining from the General Government if possible security against Conscription, taxes & the danger of invasion by being allowed to take care of ourselves, & in any event, for restraining the tendency to excess, manifested in some of the petitions, by a "declaration of rights" coupled with a declaration of duties.[15]

The effect of this decision was evident in the rapidity with which the legislature acted under Otis's leadership. The governor, in his opening speech, described the situation of the state: her coast blockaded, her capital threatened, two counties already occupied by the enemy, and her resources exhausted by the double strain of paying war taxes to the general government, and at the same time supporting the burden of her own defense. The remedy he left to the legislature to devise.[16] His speech was immediately referred to a joint committee of both houses, of which Otis was chairman.[17] Otis drew up the committee's memorable report,[18] which was submitted in three days' time. The preamble of this document dwells on the necessity for all to unite "in repelling our invading foe," and at the same time "to hold up to view, on all occasions, the destructive policy by which a state of unparallelled national felicity has been converted into one of humiliation, of danger, and distress." After a strong presentation of the historic Federalist grievances, the committee recommends that "a conference should be invited between those states, the affinity of whose

[15] Webster MSS. [16] Niles, VII, 113.

[17] Senate Journal (MS.) XXXV, 173. The other members were Senators Joseph Bemis, of Norfolk (Dem.), Wilkes Wood, of Plymouth (Fed.), and Representatives William Sullivan, of Boston, Leverett Saltonstall, of Salem, Levi Whitmore, of Norway, Me. (all Fed.) and Levi Lincoln, Jr., of Worcester (Dem.).

[18] So John Lowell wrote Timothy Pickering (*N. E. Federalism*, 410), and it was always referred to as "Otis's Report." Part of the original draft, in the Massachusetts archives, is in his handwriting. It is printed in part in Ames, *State Docs.*, no. II, 34, which see for further bibliography.

interest is closest." There followed a series of resolves, the Fifth Resolution being the definite call of the Hartford Convention:

Resolved, That twelve persons be appointed, as Delegates from this Commonwealth, to meet and confer with Delegates from the other States of New England, or any of them, upon the subjects of their public grievances and concerns, and upon the best means of preserving our resources and of defence against the enemy, and to advise and suggest for adoption by those respective States, such measures as they may deem expedient; and also to take measures, if they shall think proper, for procuring a convention of Delegates from all the United States, in order to revise the Constitution thereof, and more effectually to secure the support and attachment of all the people, by placing all upon the basis of fair representation.

Postponing analysis of the objects here expressed for the Convention to act upon, we shall note that only the New England States were to be invited to join. Every previous Federalist proposal of an interstate convention — Otis's of 1808, Gouverneur Morris's of 1812–13, the petitions of the Massachusetts towns in January, 1814 — included the "Northern and commercial states," or the "States East of Pennsylvania." But in October, 1814, as Otis doubtless realized, it would have been useless to extend the invitation beyond Massachusetts. The spring elections in New York had resulted in a Democratic landslide, and although Delaware and Maryland were still in the hands of the Federal party, and "deemed themselves oppressed," Federalism in those regions was of a different stamp from that of New England.

After an interesting debate,[19] Otis's Fifth Resolution

[19] A Democratic version of the debate is given in the Boston *Yankee*, October 14–28, 1814; also published separately (*Synopsis of Debate*, n. t. p.). A number of the speeches on the Federalist side are given in full in the Boston *Weekly Messenger*.

passed the Senate on October 12 by a vote of 22 to 12, and the House of Representatives on October 16, by 260 to 90:[20] sufficient evidence, surely, if the town memorials and the spring elections were not enough, that a strong majority of the people of Massachusetts desired a New England convention. On October 17 the governor was authorized to forward copies of Otis's Report and Resolves, together with a letter of invitation, also drawn up

[20] Senate Journal, xxxv, 205; House Journal, xxxv, Appendix. The vote by counties was as follows:

	Yeas	Nays
Suffolk (Boston)	32	0
Essex	44	9
Middlesex	18	17
Norfolk	5	11
Plymouth	9	3
Bristol	13	1
Barnstable	4	2
Worcester	36	11
Hampshire	19	0
Hampden	12	3
Franklin	20	2
Berkshire	14	8
Total, Mass. proper	226	67
Maine District	34	23
Total	260	90

This was probably a full vote of those present, since the attendance at all but the spring session was habitually small. With the Federalists numbering 360 to the 156 of the Democrats, a full attendance would not have changed the result. It will be noticed that every county in Massachusetts proper except Norfolk cast a majority for the convention, and that Middlesex County and the Maine District, both Democratic strongholds, were also slightly in favor of it. Note, also, the overwhelming majorities in Essex and Old Hampshire. In the November elections for Congress, the people again had an opportunity to pass on the Convention, with similar results. Out of eighteen districts, fifteen Federalists and one Democrat were chosen; in the two others there was a Federalist plurality, these last three being in Maine. Timothy Pickering was reëlected by 1261 votes out of a total of 1436; John Holmes, who had made the strongest speech against the Convention in the General Court, was defeated.

by Otis, to the governors of the other New England States. On the following day a convention of both houses, attended only by Federalists, unanimously elected twelve delegates to represent Massachusetts at Hartford, on December 15, 1814.

At the head of the list was the name of George Cabot, and next in order came that of Harrison Gray Otis. His acceptance of this appointment was the most momentous act of his career. According to his own statement he undertook the task with reluctance,[21] and only at the earnest request of his colleagues. But as majority leader of the General Court, as author of the Fifth Resolution, he was more responsible for the Hartford Convention than any other man, and his duty clearly lay in assuming his responsibility before the public.

The first state to act on the invitation was Connecticut. That steadfast bulwark of Federalism had likewise suffered from British raids on her exposed and undefended coast. The same controversy over the command and pay of the militia existed there as in Massachusetts, and Governor Smith recalled the only detachment of state militia in national service on the very day of the burning of Washington. Connecticut felt herself no less wronged, deserted, and cheated than her sister state. When the invitation from Massachusetts arrived, the General Assembly, then in session, was greatly excited over the new measures before Congress, which seemed to them grossly unconstitutional and oppressive: — Giles's bill for filling the regular army by a forced draft, and a bill authorizing the enlistment of minors over seventeen years of age without the consent of their parents or guardians. According to Theodore Dwight, "The fears of parents were excited to the highest degree, by this bold

[21] *Otis' Letters*, 3.

and arbitrary attempt to destroy the moral character and welfare of their children — to take them from under parental care and controul, and place them in the purlieus of a camp, and in the midst of the contaminating atmosphere of a regular army." [22]

The resolutions from Massachusetts were referred to a joint committee, which soon issued a report breathing the most intense spirit of Connecticut Federalism. The French Revolution, "modern scourge of nations," from whose corruption "this state has been eminently exempt"; the happy era of Washington, when the Wise and Good ruled the land; the "coalition, not less evident than if defined by the articles of a formal treaty, . . . between the national administration and that fearful tyrant in Europe," are all reviewed. Devotion to the Union and to the Constitution — were it observed by the administration — are expressed, but the people of Connecticut are "conscious of their rights and determined to defend them," and to maintain at every hazard "those inestimable institutions civil and religious, which their venerable fathers have bequeathed them." The report was followed by a resolution to appoint seven persons to meet delegates from other states at Hartford on December 15, "for the purpose of devising and recommending such measures for the safety and welfare of this State, as may consist with our obligations as members of the National Union." Both report and resolution passed the assembly by the emphatic vote of 153 to 36.[23]

Rhode Island was the third and last state to accept the invitation to be represented officially at Hartford. She had already taken the initiative for interstate defense by

[22] *History of the Hartford Convention*, 335. During the October session the Assembly threatened to nullify these offensive bills, should they become laws. Ames, *State Docs.*, no. II, 32.

[23] Niles, VII, 158.

authorizing her governor, in case a neighboring state were invaded, to march the militia to its assistance.[24] On November 5 the legislature adopted a report similar to those of Massachusetts and Connecticut, and resolved to appoint four delegates to the Hartford Convention "to confer . . . upon the common dangers to which these States are exposed, upon the best means for co-operating for our mutual defence against the enemy, and upon the measures which it may be in the power of said States, consistently with their obligations, to adopt, to restore and secure to the people thereof their rights and privileges under the constitution of the United States."[25] The vote on this resolution in the lower house, 39 to 28,[26] showed a slighter majority than in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

In New Hampshire the governor and legislature were Federalist, but the latter was not in session when the invitation from Massachusetts was received. It has generally been supposed that the opposition of his Democratic council prevented Governor Gilman from calling the assembly together; but a letter from him to Otis[27] makes it clear that he and the "best men" in Exeter and Portsmouth feared "the consequences of a call for the Especial purpose even if a Majority of the Council would consent to it."

In Vermont, the Federal party had a clear majority in the General Assembly, and Governor Chittenden had taken the Federalist side of the militia question since his election in 1813. But Prevost's invasion, and the battle of Plattsburg, aroused a spirit in Vermont Federalists quite different from anything their Massachusetts brethren had yet exhibited. Governor Chittenden proclaimed, on September 19, that since the war had become almost ex-

[24] Niles, VII, 149.
[25] Niles, VII, 181.
[26] Providence *R. I. American*, November 8, 1814. Niles says 39–23.
[27] Printed in chap. XXVIII.

clusively defensive, all party distinctions and animosities should be laid aside; a truth which Otis, unfortunately, did not perceive. A Federalist caucus in the legislature decided not to accept the invitation to Hartford.[28]

The people of Cheshire and Grafton Counties in New Hampshire, and of Windham County in Vermont, both sections being overwhelmingly Federalist, then proceeded to elect delegates to Hartford through county conventions and mass meetings.[29] But the presence of these three

[28] *Records of Governor and Council*, VI, 462–64, 94.

[29] A "meeting of citizens from several towns in the county of Cheshire, at Wells' Inn, in Keene," on November 10, drew up resolutions approving the action of Massachusetts, and calling a "convention from the several towns in this county, to be holden at Walpole, on the second day of December next, for the purpose of choosing one suitable person" to represent Cheshire, (which included the present Sullivan County), at the Hartford Convention. Delegates from twenty-six towns were present at the Walpole convention, which drew up an "Address to the People," and sent Benjamin West as a delegate to Hartford. In Grafton County, New Hampshire, a meeting of the "friends of peace" at Bath called a convention at Haverhill, which met on December 7, and elected Mills Olcott to represent them at Hartford. Most of the towns in the county, and Lancaster, in Coos County, were represented at the Haverhill convention. In Windham County, Vermont, William Hall, Jr., was chosen a delegate to Hartford at a mass meeting at Newfane on December 13. His original credentials are in the library of the Vermont Historical Society. Josiah Dunham, a cousin of Otis, and the state secretary of Vermont, was elected to the Hartford Convention at a Federalist meeting in Windsor County, but was refused admittance, probably for the very fact that he represented a minority in a strongly Democratic county. Files of the Keene *New Hampshire Sentinel* (examined for me through the kindness of Miss Saxton, of the Keene Public Library); the Windsor (Vermont) *Republican Weekly* and *Washingtonian* (Am. Antiq. Soc.) and the Salem *Gazette*, for December, 1814. Cheshire, Grafton, and Windham Counties were in 1814, and always had been, strongly Federalist (cf. O. G. Libby, *Geogr. Distrib. of Vote on Fed. Constit.*, 8–11). Returns of the state elections of 1815 show that the Cheshire towns represented at the Walpole convention were all Federalist; and the vote of Grafton County for governor was 3212 Fed., 1919 Dem. In Windham County, Vermont, only 4 out of the 21 towns had Democratic representatives in the assembly. These facts disprove J. Q. Adams's assertion (*N. E. Federalism*, 252) that Messrs. West, Olcott, and Hall represented only minorities in their respective counties, and Charles Jared Ingersoll's picturesque description of them (*Second War*, 1849 ed., II, 232) as "Mere county delegates, self-styled suffragans, whose surreptitious appointment is familiar to the lowest partisan, [who] volunteered to represent parts of counties from Vermont and New Hampshire."

delegates was small consolation to the Massachusetts leaders for the failure of those states to send official delegations. The Hartford Convention could justly claim to represent majorities of the people of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, but because of the failure of Vermont and New Hampshire to follow their example, it could not pretend to represent the entire people of New England.

CHAPTER XXIV

HARTFORD CONVENTION: III. OBJECTS

BEFORE accompanying these six-and-twenty "Wise men of the East," as Gouverneur Morris called the chosen delegates, to Hartford, it would be well to find out what they intended to do there, and what their own party expected of them. To the first question it is impossible to give a definite reply, for it is improbable that any member had digested a definite plan to follow before the Hartford Convention met.[1] They were so reticent of expressing their intentions in their correspondence as to mystify such prominent New England Federalists in Congress as Christopher Gore, Daniel Webster, and Jeremiah Mason.[2] But in Otis's subsequent vindications of the Hartford Convention are found statements of its objects that are worth a critical examination; and from newspapers, legislative resolves, and private correspondence can be obtained a fairly clear idea of what the party in general, and the Essex Junto in particular, expected the Hartford Convention to perform.

Otis always insisted that the Convention had but two objects: to defend New England against invasion, and to turn the popular excitement and resentment into legitimate channels. "Its main and avowed object was the *defence of this part of the country against the common enemy.*" [3] "It was intended by those who voted for it, as a

[1] This was Christopher Gore's conclusion, after pumping George Cabot immediately after the Convention was over. *King*, v, 478.

[2] G. T. Curtis, *Webster*, I, 136; G. S. Hilliard, *Jeremiah Mason*. Cf. the vagueness of Otis's letters to Harper and Morris (chap. XXVIII).

[3] *N. E. Federalism*, 86.

safety valve by which the steam arising from the fermentation of the times might escape, not as a boiler in which it should be generated." [4] These and similar statements, combined with insistence that the Hartford Convention was intended to save, not to destroy, the Union, constitute the main thesis of his *apologia*.

Taking up first his second point, there is no doubt that he and several other members of the Hartford Convention were considerably alarmed at the whirlwind of popular excitement they had helped to create in Massachusetts. Otis, as we have seen, had twice aided in forestalling the Hartford Convention, and had successfully quashed Fessenden's proposal of nullification in January, 1814. Again on October 8, just after Otis's report had been read in the Senate, one of the radicals, "Monarchy-and-all" Blake, introduced a resolution prohibiting the collection of customs and other federal revenues within Massachusetts. Otis, rising immediately, expressed his regret that such a resolve had been made. It would certainly bring on a conflict, he said, with the general government, which he did not desire to see, and he hoped the Senator from Worcester would withdraw his resolution — as he did.[5] Not only Otis, but Governor Strong, brought forward the Convention project in October partly in order to divert the popular attention from the radical propositions of Blake and Fessenden, and thus prevent a physical conflict with the federal government.[6] Nathan Dane[7] and

[4] Letter to Mrs. Willard, H. S. Randall, *Jefferson*, III, 418.

[5] Boston *Yankee*, October 14, 1814.

[6] So Daniel Appleton White, a Senator from Essex who voted for the Convention, wrote in his memoirs, *Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc.*, VI, 288.

[7] Dane writes in his *General Abridgement and History of American Law* (1829) IX, 594, 597: "Moderate men saw the excitement was going too far and that it was leading to evils far greater than the war itself. . . . The fact was, before it was known who would be the members, such was the excitement and discontent with federal measures, that cool men and firm friends of the Union,

George Cabot accepted their election as delegates to the Convention with the same end in view.[8] But although Otis and Cabot and the rest wished popular disaffection to go no further, they "were yet desirous of keeping a hold on this temper," wrote Christopher Gore,[9] so that "if occasion occurred, it might be improved to advantage." As Otis admitted in his letter of 1840 to Noah Webster, it was impossible "to say 'thus far may ye come but no further,' without refrigerating the popular zeal in opposition to the ruinous system of Government."[10] The truth is that Otis and his friends were equally afraid of "refrigerating the popular zeal" and of permitting it to generate greater heat. By steering a middle course between inactivity on the one hand, and nullification or secession on the other, they hoped to force the government to recede on the militia question, to bring the war to an end, and to pose as the saviors of New England.

The avowed motive for calling the Hartford Conven-

deeply interested in its preservation, had some fears on this head. The Convention had to steer its course between Scylla and Charybdis. It was imperiously required, on the one hand, to promote the objects of its constituents and to express their excited and angry feelings and increasing discontent towards the administration of federal affairs; and, on the other, to moderate and allay those very feelings and that same discontent then increasing to dangerous extremes. When multitudes are very much excited and highly dissatisfied with their rulers' conduct, often they can be moderated by their friends only when they know not their friends check them." Cf. Lodge, *Cabot*, 601.

[8] Cabot, shortly after the Convention was over, in conversation with Christopher Gore, "laughed very heartily at his going to Hartford, and says he was prevailed upon to take the journey, merely because they declared an absolute determination, in all men of any standing in the community not to go, unless he went, and that a measure of the Sort, was necessary to allay the ferment and prevent a crisis, in the hope of something occurring to change the state of affairs." *King*, v, 476. Cf. Lodge, *Cabot*, 519, and E. Quincy, *J. Quincy*, 357–58.

[9] April 24, 1815, *King*, v, 478.

[10] Cf. his letter of December 15, 1808, to Quincy: "This temper, you are sensible, must not be extinguished for want of sympathy, nor be permitted to burst forth into imprudent excess."

tion was, as we have seen, the wish to secure, in concert with the rest of New England, an arrangement with the federal government permitting those states to apply the federal taxes within their own borders to their own defense, and thus avoid the alternative of paying a double set of war taxes, or of placing the militia under "military prefects." This arrangement seems to have been a favorite scheme of Otis. In his letter of invitation to the other New England States he places it first in order among the objects on which the Hartford Convention should deliberate; he made his opening speech to the Convention on that subject; and he received the appointment as one of the commissioners to Washington who should carry out the Convention's recommendation that the arrangement be adopted. But the defense of New England against the enemy was certainly not, as Otis states in one of his vindications, the "main" object of the Convention. The town resolutions of 1814 show that the popular call for a Northern convention was based on a belief that New England required permanent guarantees in the form of constitutional amendments.[11] But how would it be possible to secure these, without the required consent of two thirds of both houses of Congress, an acquiescence obviously impossible to obtain in 1814? Charles Willing Hare of Philadelphia, where the Federalists were evidently of one mind with their New England brethren, offered a solution in a letter to Otis on October 1, 1814.[12] He wished a "meeting of deputies from the New England States" to call a second convention of *all* the states, "with power to decide on peace & war, & to make such modifications of our existing political arrangements, as shall reconcile conflicting interests,

[11] Cf. the Rev. Joseph Lyman's letter in chap. XXVIII.
[12] Printed in full in chap. XXVIII.

secure the observance of a wise commercial policy, and establish on a sure foundation the durability of the Union." Exactly one week after this letter was written, Otis's Report was laid on the table in the Senate of Massachusetts. Hare's suggestion had evidently appealed to the committee, for the report, after enumerating the historic Federalist grievances and remarking that no prospect existed of securing amendments by "the ordinary mode," made the following statement:

> The people, however, possess the means of certain redress; and when their safety, which is the supreme law, is in question, these means should be promptly applied. The framers of the constitution made provision to mend defects, which were known to be incident to every human institution; and the provision itself was not less likely to be found defective upon experiment, than other parts of the instrument. When this deficiency becomes apparent, no reason can preclude the right of the whole people, who were parties to it, to adopt another.

The report went on to say that the Hartford Convention is to be called "to the end that . . . some mode of defence . . . may be devised; and also to enable the delegates from those States, should they deem it expedient, to lay the foundation for a radical reform in the national compact, by inviting to a further convention, a deputation from all the States in the union."[13] Otis's circular letter of invitation to the New England governors is equally explicit, in its third paragraph:

> When convened for this object, [defense] which admits not of delay, it seems also expedient to submit to their consideration, the enquiry, whether the interests of these States demand, that persevering endeavors be made by each of them to procure such amendments to be effected in the national Constitution as may secure to them the benefits of a fair and equal

[13] Ames, *State Docs.*, no. II, 34–35.

representation equal advantages, and whether, if in their judgment this should be deemed impracticable under the existing provisions for amending that Instrument, an experiment may be made, without disadvantage to the nation, for obtaining a Convention from all the States in the Union, or such of them as may approve of the measure, with a view to obtain such amendment.[14]

Otis's own programme, then, recommended the Hartford Convention not only to suggest amendments to the Constitution, but also to call a new constitutional convention to frame a radical revision of it. This point was made even more clear in the debate on Otis's Report. Stephen Longfellow, who was chosen one of the delegates to Hartford, said, "I would appeal to the justice of the other states, with the hope that they will still be disposed to regard our rights; but if these measures should prove unsuccessful, I hope and trust there is sufficient energy and spirit in the people of New England to vindicate their rights at every hazard."[15] Noah Webster was even more explicit: — he described the Annapolis Convention of 1786, that called the Constitutional Convention of the following year, and remarked, "This mode of rectifying errors and supplying the defects of the confederation, is a precedent precisely in point — according exactly with the mode proposed by the resolution before us." [16]

Why, then, was this idea of calling a new constitutional convention abandoned at Hartford? Did Otis and his colleagues perceive that so sweeping a demand could only be accompanied by a threat of making secession the alternative, if it were not complied with? The only

[14] Quoted from Otis's original draft in the Mass. Archives, Senate Files.

[15] Boston *Weekly Messenger*, December 2, 1814.

[16] Boston *Weekly Messenger*, November 4. Otis admits somewhat reluctantly, in *One of the Convention*, that amendments were a subsidiary object of the Convention, but obscures the fact in his later defenses. Cf. Hare's letter to Otis of October 15, 1814 (chap. xxviii).

definite clue to Otis's attitude between the issuing of his committee report and the meeting of the Convention is furnished by a letter of December 3, 1814, from John Lowell to Timothy Pickering, estimating the Massachusetts delegates to Hartford. "Mr. Otis," writes Lowell, "is naturally timid, and frequently wavering — to-day bold, and to-morrow like a hare trembling at every breeze. It would seem by his language that he is prepared for the very boldest measures; but he receives anonymous letters threatening him with bodily harm. It seems the other party suspect his firmness. He is sincere in wishing thorough measures, but a thousand fears restrain him." Since those who followed a *juste milieu* were always denounced by Lowell and his friends for their timidity, one would prefer to believe that Otis's abandonment of the constitutional convention scheme was due to common sense, not to fear. But in any case, this letter shows that Otis was of two minds before the Convention met.

From our study of the origin of the convention scheme, of the speeches in the debate on his report, and the report itself, we must conclude that Otis, and his committee, and the majority of the General Court, called the Hartford Convention in order to secure a strong and united expression of New England's grievances, an arrangement for New England to provide for her own defense from national taxes, and a "radical reform in the national compact." This was John Lowell's conclusion in early December, after sounding the Massachusetts delegates and leading members of the General Court. And although there is no definite evidence on this point, it is highly probable that most New England Federalists expected that the Convention would force Madison to abandon his *sine qua non* that England must renounce impressment, and to make peace on her terms. Otis wrote

R. G. Harper that ninety out of one hundred Massachusetts Federalists preferred to embrace the first terms laid down by England, requiring the cession of a portion of Maine, rather than to continue the war a day longer.[17] Had the news of the Peace of Ghent arrived a few days later than it did, the General Court would have adopted resolutions expressing this view.[18]

But the moderate programme for the Convention fell far short of satisfying the Essex Junto wing of Massachusetts Federalism, or the extreme Federalists elsewhere. Both factions, while outwardly deprecating secession, did everything in their power to provoke the Convention into a course that would have rendered such a result inevitable. The most dangerous proposals came from men outside New England, who had nothing to lose if the members of the Convention were all hanged for treason. Gouverneur Morris wrote Otis on November 8, 1814, that the Convention must march ahead of public opinion, and treat the Constitution as non-existent. He held out the hope that New England, through *une douce violence*, would compel New York to join her; a statement which could have had only one meaning to Otis, since Morris had urged him in 1813 to consider the possibility of secession.[19] Alexander Contee Hanson, the editor of the newspaper that had been mobbed in Baltimore in 1812, predicted that unless Madison resigned, the Hartford Convention would frame a new constitution, to

[17] The letter will be found in chap. XXVIII.

[18] *King* V, 476. Cf. Rev. Joseph Lyman's letter. Hare's letters suggest that Otis had written him that he hoped through the Convention to force Madison to resign the presidency.

[19] Chap. XXVIII. A letter from Morris to Lewis B. Sturges, of Connecticut, dated November 1, 1814, shows that Morris expected New England to secede, and hoped that New York would join her. "The question of boundary to be solved, therefore, is the Delaware, the Susquehanna, or the Potomac." Sparks, *Morris*, III, 319. Note Sturges's warning against such a course in his letter in chap. XXVIII.

go into effect as soon as adopted by two or three states.[20] Charles Willing Hare announced, in one of his letters to Otis, that the Federalists "must either rally round the national government for the purpose of maintaining the national independence, or they must overthrow it in order to do so themselves." This was, by the way, excellent advice. Samuel Dexter and Rufus King took the former course, and emerged from the war as patriots; Timothy Pickering and John Lowell attempted to take the latter, which, if successful, would have made them patriots; Otis steered the Hartford Convention into a middle course, and received the unenviable reputation of a would-be rebel who let "I dare not wait upon I would."

[20] In an article in his paper, the Georgetown (formerly Baltimore) *Federal Republican*, November 7, 1814, as follows:

"*New-England Convention.* — That there will be a *revolution* if the war continues many months, no man can doubt, who is at all acquainted with human nature, and who is accustomed to study, and trace cause and effect. Mr. Gerry may tell Mr. Madison what he pleases, and Mr. Madison may believe Mr. Gerry, and they may both treat the convention with contempt and ridicule, but the eastern states are marching steadily and straight forward in solid columns, directly up to their object. In times past, there has been much talk and loud menaces, but little action by the advocates of reform in New-England. Now we shall hear little said, and see much done. The plan as we understand it, is 'to make the convention of 1788 the basis of their proceedings' and to frame a new government, to be submitted to the legislatures of the several states for their approbation and adoption. The new constitution to go into operation as in the former case, as soon as two, three or more of the states *named* shall have adopted it. The government to be as it is now, so modified in its minor provisions as to withold the right of suffrage from all but *free native white citizens*. To forbid the creation and admission into the union of new States without the consent of all the States. Two thirds of both branches of Congress to be necessary to declare war. The term of Presidential service to be lengthened, but the same person not to be re-eligible. The imposition of unlimited restrictions upon commerce to be prohibited. The slave representation to be abolished &c.

"On or before the 4th of July, if Jas. Madison is not out of office, a new form of government will be in operation in the eastern section of the union. Instantly after, the contest in many of the states will be whether to adhere to the old, or join the new government. Like every thing else foretold years ago, and which is verified every day, this warning will also be ridiculed as visionary. Be it so. But Mr. Madison cannot complete his term of service, if the war continues. It is not possible and if he knew human nature, he would see it."

What Hare and Morris and Hanson had to say on the proper course for the Hartford Convention to pursue was of little importance in comparison with the designs of the Essex Junto. Although Ames and Parsons were dead, and Cabot had become a moderate, Timothy Pickering was as powerful as ever, and John Lowell, the most influential pamphleteer in New England, acted as his press agent. Men like Christopher Gore, Timothy Bigelow, and Samuel Putnam, had filled the places of the departed members of the faction. In 1804, secession was Pickering's crude remedy for New England's grievances, but in 1814 he had found a more subtle solution. He would encourage the West to secede from the Union, in the hope that the Southern and Middle States, fearing to face Great Britain alone without New England, would consent to a new union of the "good old thirteen states" on New England's terms. The West, in short, as a punishment for showing so little respect for New England interests, was to be kicked out of the Union. Pickering had been advancing this idea to his correspondents since the beginning of the war,[21] and John Lowell had published, in 1813, a pamphlet expressing the same view.[22] Late in 1814, Pickering believed that the consummation of his desires was near at hand. Taking it for granted that Pakenham's expedition would capture New Orleans, and would hold permanently the mouth of the Mississippi for New England, he expected that the Western States, even if unconquered, would voluntarily join the British Empire,— just as they had threatened to do with respect to Spain, when that power controlled their principal trade route. The West once out of the way, the South would be at

[21] *N. E. Federalism*, 389–91; E. Quincy, *J. Quincy*, 324.

[22] *Thoughts in a series of letters, in answer to a question respecting the Division of the States, by a Massachusetts Farmer.*

New England's feet, and must accept whatever amendments to the Constitution the Hartford Convention might demand.[23]

On the assumption that events would take this course, John Lowell mapped out a radical programme for the Convention in a series of articles in the Boston *Advertiser*, entitled "What is expected of the Convention at Hartford. What it can do, and what it ought to do."[24] He urged the Convention to announce the neutrality of New England during the remainder of the war,[25] and to recommend the states to declare the Constitution suspended. In that case, "the people of that state are no longer holden to perform their engagements to the National authority. They cannot be traitors or rebels. They may be treated as enemies, like the citizens of any foreign state, if a wrecked and abandoned and desperate policy should induce the National rulers to declare war against such a state" — an important contribution to the theory of secession. Lowell only hinted at the advantage of a separation of the East from the West, but another correspondent of the *Advertiser*, who signed himself "Refederator" frankly argued for the Pickering plan, in a series of articles "To the President of the United States on the Subject of the New-England Convention." This writer wishes

[23] *N. E. Federalism*, 416–20, 424; Lodge, *Cabot*, 557. The idea was evidently shared by Charles Carroll of Carrollton, who wrote Robert G. Harper, December 4, 1814: "Should the enemy succeed, perhaps the Western States, partly by force and partly by advantages which the British may hold out to them, may be induced to form a separate Confederacy. Their separation will secure the union of the Atlantic States, and form the best security for Canada." K. M. Rowland, *Charles Carroll*, II, 307.

[24] Boston *Advertiser*, November 21–December 2, 1814.

[25] A writer in the *Advertiser* in November, 1813, proposed that New England should make a separate peace with the enemy (Niles, V, 199), and Gore wrote King from Boston a few months previously "Some men talk here of making a Declaration, next Winter, that the Union is dissolved and that Massachusetts is willing to be at peace with G. B." *King*, V, 343.

[26] *Advertiser*, November 16–24.

the constitutional convention, which, according to Otis's Report, the Hartford Convention is to call, to

> form a new confederation, grounded on experience; without however, excluding the Southern Atlantic States. . . . The Western States beyond the mountains, are not taken into view in this connexion, for any other purpose than to shew, that they do not, ought not, and never can belong to the Union. Their outlet is through the Mississippi. They have no natural connexion with the Atlantic States . . . If the Union of the States is preserved, the Western region will drain off the Atlantic population,[27] consume the resources of the Union — and reward us by removing the seat of Empire beyond the mountains. What then seems to be most obviously to the interest of all concerned? *Let the Western States go off*, and take care of themselves. Give them the public lands to pay their debts with, and thank them into the bargain . . . Then let us, who belonged to the old family, try, by the agency of such men as are to meet at *Hartford*, . . . [to] revise our family compact . . . With the wisdom of experience, it may be hoped, that a lasting and beneficial Union might be formed. *When the treaty shall have been made, none but the old members should be invited to become parties to it.*

It is clear, then, that the Essex Junto wished the Hartford Convention, either directly or through another convention, to draw up a new constitution, that should be offered for ratification to the "good old thirteen states," but not to the West. Such a course, if supported by the New England States, would of course have resulted in their separation from the United States, as surely as if they had passed ordinances of secession. But the bulk of the New England Federalists probably wished the Hartford Convention to do no more than present grievances, propose amendments, and arrange for defending New England. After conversing with the Massachusetts delegates, John Lowell had little hope that the Pickering

[27] Cf. Nathan Dane's "Schedule J" in chap. XXVIII.

plan would be advocated by any of them, save by Timothy Bigelow, whom he found "really bold on the present question."[28] But, as in most crises, only the radicals made themselves heard. The Federalist press throughout New England quoted Lowell and "Refederator" with approval, and published numerous articles recommending their programme to the Hartford Convention. The *Centinel* announced Connecticut's acceptance of the invitation to send delegates to Hartford as "SECOND PILLAR *of a new* FEDERAL EDIFICE *reared*," and the adhesion of Rhode Island as "Third Pillar Raised."[29] "Epaminondas," in the same journal, called on the Convention: "Advance boldly to the task assigned you, Suffer yourselves not to be entangled by the *cobwebs* of a compact, which has long since ceased to exist." No attempt was made to conciliate Virginia; on the contrary, truculent comparisons were frequently drawn between her militia and that of Massachusetts, and threats were openly expressed that any attempt to coerce New England would cause civil war.[30]

[28] *N. E. Federalism*, 412. Bigelow delivered a notable *Address on the third anniversary of the Washington Benevolent Society*, on April 30, 1814, in which he exposed the ancient separatist tendencies of the Westerners, and stated: "They are now endeavoring by oppression to compel the people of the commercial States to separate from the Union in self-defence, in the hope that the odium of the measure may be transferred to its apparent authors" (p. 14). The obvious conclusion was that the commercial states ought to separate from the West; just as the Southern secessionists of the fifties argued that the abolitionists were trying to drive the slaveholding states out of the Union.

[29] November 9. The significance of these headings lay in the fact that in 1788 the *Centinel* had announced the successive ratifications of the Constitution by similar captions, with a rude cut representing a colonnade of as many pillars as the number of states that had ratified.

[30] An open letter in the *Advertiser* to John Randolph, who had threatened that Virginia would exclude New England vessels from her ports, read thus: "Sir, if you should pass an act excluding a ship, before your legislature could be convened from your unwieldy state we should have fifty sail of sloops of war in your rivers. Your generals would be scampering from river to river with ill-armed, ragged, starving, sickly troops, to fight an enemy whom they could never find. New England will ask for her rights humbly, but she relies chiefly on her sword for the vindication of them." Cf. *Ibid.*, November 7, and "The Crisis," in the *Centinel*, December 17.

It is futile to argue that these radicals were not secessionists because they wished to preserve the union with the Atlantic States. No one in his senses would have desired a New England confederacy if the South had been ready to amend the Constitution at New England's bidding. Few Southerners would have urged secession in 1861 if the North had granted all their demands. Otis attempted to show in after years that the violent articles in the Boston journals were irresponsible effusions, no more dangerous to the Union than later articles of equal violence in the Southern press on the Missouri, the Bank, and the Tariff questions; but he ignored the significant circumstances. In December, 1814, the Union was in danger, quite apart from any action the Hartford Convention might take. Although one British invasion had been stopped at Plattsburg, the New Orleans expedition was on its way; the enemy still held a part of Maine; the American navy was annihilated; the Capitol was in ruins; and the federal government at the end of its resources. Many states outside New England were looking to their own governments for protection,[31] and making demands on the federal government almost as unreasonable as those of the Massachusetts Federalists. The very existence of a convention of disaffected states at this time was encouraging to the enemy[32] and a menace to the Union,

[31] Six states outside New England — New York, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia — took steps in 1813 and 1814 to form state armies. Hildreth, *United States*, VI, 554; Hartford *Conn. Courant*, November 1, 1814; H. Adams, *United States*, VIII, 282–86. A bill for calling 10,000 militia into service for two years, to be paid for by the United States "and their service to be confined to this state or to the States immediately adjoining thereto," was lost in the Virginia Assembly by a vote of 51 to 89 on January 2, 1815. Richmond *Enquirer*, January 5, 1815. A notable article headed "The Prospect before us" in the *Enquirer* for January 3, speaks of the general demoralization, the inefficiency of Congress, and the expectation of relief from the states on the part of the people.

[32] Under ordinary circumstances, the existence of the Hartford Convention would have encouraged the British government to stand out for its original

which could be preserved only if the assembled delegates should have the wisdom and moderation to resist radical influence.

demands. The London press followed the movement with great interest, and although the opposition papers minimized its importance, the Tory press used it as an argument for perseverance. The *Times*, for instance, remarked on December 26: "The New England States have loudly declared their determination no longer to be tyrannised over by the atrocious faction of which this man [Madison] is the tool and the mouthpiece. This best and most respectable part of the United States it would be equally for our honour and for our interest to conciliate. With them let us treat, and not with the traitor Madison. New England allied with Old England would form a dignified and manly union well deserving the name of Peace; but any treaty signed by the vagabond Genevese Gallatin, or by Joe Barlow's understrapper, Mr. Jonathan Russell, would be to Great Britain at once a degradation and a snare." Had not Wellington become convinced that the United States could not be reduced by invasion, and had not the European situation made it necessary for England to make peace, arguments such as this might have prevailed.

CHAPTER XXV

HARTFORD CONVENTION: IV. MEMBERS AND SESSIONS

DECEMBER 15, 1814 — JANUARY 5, 1815. ÆT. 49

No one better realized the heavy responsibility that rested on the Hartford Convention than the delegates themselves, when they assembled at Hartford for the opening session, on Thursday, December 15, 1814. Otis's feelings on that occasion are revealed in a letter to his wife, written in the early afternoon of the same day:

We met this morning in the State House, and all the delegates from this State & Connecticut were present. All except one from Rhode Island,[1] were also present. Two only from New Hampshire. Mr Cabot unanimously chosen President — Mr. Dwight [2] *not a member*, Secretary. We have examined our credentials, heard prayers and adjourned untill afternoon. My associates are a body of highly respectable men, and of firm and united views. it is impossible for me to conjecture the result of our deliberations, and if I could, I should be inhibited from communicating it. Our proceedings will be with closed doors, and nothing will be permitted to escape untill results are determined upon. Our task is arduous. A suffering community looks to us for a relief, which they see no means of procuring for themselves. If we fail in recommending such measures we shall incur blame, and create disappointment. If we do recommend them, they may probably be defective and induce evils which they are intended to cure. But with honest hearts, and clear consciences, and good nerves I trust we shall pursue our course steadily and cheerfully.

[1] Samuel Ward.

[2] Theodore Dwight (1764–1846), editor of the *Connecticut Mirror*, member of the Council of Connecticut, brother of Timothy Dwight (the President of Yale College), and author of the *History of the Hartford Convention*.

For the past six weeks, the approaching convention at Hartford had almost eclipsed the war in public interest. The administration newspapers throughout the country were one in the sentiment that the Hartford Convention was organized by a junto of ambitious politicians with a view to erecting a separate New England Confederacy. Otis afterwards observed that, since party government began, the charge of conspiracy and treason had always been during wartime, a useful weapon of ruling parties against peace parties.[3] Perhaps he remembered his own use of this accusation in the naval war with France. But there is no doubt that in 1814 the Republicans made these charges in all sincerity, and were really alarmed over the situation. They did not confine their criticisms to mere denunciation and ridicule, although some excellent political satire on the Convention appeared,[4] and at least one caricature, which is here reproduced. In several Democratic journals were published eloquent addresses to the

[3] *Otis' Letters*, 17–21.

[4] The best contemporary satire on the Hartford Convention is in a rare pamphlet — *The Hartford Convention in an uproar, . . . by Hector Benevolus, Esq.* (Windsor, Vt. 1815), which begins as follows:

"1. And it came to pass in the days of James the President, that certain infuriate Princes and Nobles of the Eastern Provinces mutinized, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'

"2. Now the dominions of James were very extensive, consisting of eighteen provinces, and several large territories.

"3. And there was among the mutineers one Caleb Baal parazim, tetrarch of a Province that lieth toward the N. E. bordering upon the seacoast.

"4. This man wrote letters to the tetrarchs of five of the provinces which lie round about, saying,

"5. Appoint ye men to go up to the palace of a city that lieth in the south west province, that we may consult together and make war with James, and with the people of the other provinces, and separate ourselves from them;

"6. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet John, whose sir-name was Henry, saying,

"7. 'The Legislature of Massachusetts will give the tone to the neighboring states; will invite a new Congress, to be composed of delegates from the several states, and erect a separate government, for their common defence and common interest.'"

Convention, begging it not to start a civil war,[5] the most forcible of which was an open letter to James Lloyd from John Randolph,[6] whose hatred of the war and the administration equaled that of any New England Federalist. The crisis also brought out a pamphlet of great influence, Matthew Carey's "Olive Branch, or Faults on Both Sides," which ran through ten editions. It attempted to prove, by the convincing method of citing Federalist speeches, resolves, and newspaper articles, that a disunion conspiracy existed in New England; and further demonstrated, by a clever manipulation of statistics, that the preëminence of New England's commerce was a fable, her natural resources nil, and her existence as a separate nation impossible. It is also interesting to find that the Southern press now appreciated the fatal trend of the state sovereignty theories, so strongly supported by it in 1798. "Epsilon," in the *National Intelligencer* of December 8, argued that the people, not the states, adopted the Constitution and possessed the sovereign power. The Richmond *Enquirer* stated categorically that nullification or secession was treason,[7] and that the respectable gentlemen assembled at Hartford, if they attempted either course, should be treated as traitors.[8]

[5] E.g., *Independent Chronicle*, December 22 and 26, 1814, and article "New-England Convention" in Niles, VII, 185.

[6] Niles, VII, 258–62.

[7] "No man, no association of men, no state or set of states *has a right* to withdraw itself from this Union, of its own accord. The same power which knit us together, can only unknit. The same formality, which forged the links of the Union, is necessary to dissolve it. The *majority of states* which form the Union must consent to the withdrawal of *any one* branch of it. Until *that* consent has been obtained, any attempt to dissolve the *Union*, or to obstruct the efficacy of its constitutional laws, is Treason — Treason to all intents & purposes.

"Any other doctrine, such as that which has been lately held forth by the Federal Republican that any one State may withdraw itself from the Union, is an abominable heresy." Richmond *Enquirer*, November 1, 1814. Cf. F. J. Turner, *Rise of the New West*, 299.

[8] *Enquirer*, November 19.

It is most regrettable that the *Enquirer* afterwards abandoned this excellent doctrine.

President Madison was full of apprehension as to the outcome of the Hartford Convention. A visitor in October found him "miserably shattered and woe-begone," and his heart and mind painfully full of the subject.[9] He may well have regretted his authorship of the Virginia Resolves of 1798, now referred to daily by New Englanders as precedents for state interposition and nullification. James Monroe, now Secretary of War, wrote Jefferson the day before the Convention met, that he was confident of its speedy collapse,[10] but his conduct certainly showed fear that the Convention would organize a civil war. He ordered Colonel Thomas S. Jesup, head of the military district of Connecticut, to report to him on the doings of the Convention, and in case any signs of rebellion appeared, to call on the governor of New York for military aid to suppress it.[11]

General Jackson once asserted that in Colonel Jesup's place, he would have court-martialed the "three principal leaders of the party,"[12] — an empty boast, for there was nothing illegal, much less treasonable, in the mere fact of the Convention. It was not an "agreement or compact" between states; it was granted no authority whatever, and attempted to exercise none. Its members were strictly enjoined, by the states that chose them, to make no recommendations "repugnant to their obligations as members of the Union"; and even had they disregarded this command, and recommended secession and a separate peace, there was no way that the federal government could have punished them without a sedition act. But

[9] J. P. Kennedy, *William Wirt*, I, 381; Cf. Madison's *Works*, II, 593.
[10] Monroe, *Writings*, V, 305.
[11] C. J. Ingersoll, *Second War with Great Britain* (1849), II, 235.
[12] Parton, *Life of Jackson*, II, 367.

Colonel Jesup soon ascertained, and reported to the War Department, that neither the members of the Convention nor the people of Connecticut had any treasonable intent.[13]

The Federalist press in the Middle and Southern States approved of the Convention, although its sympathy was sometimes qualified by an expression of confidence that nothing rash would be effected. Among leading Federalists outside New England there was considerable difference of opinion concerning the expediency of holding it at such a time of national danger.[14] Gouverneur Morris, however, wrote Pickering at Washington while the Convention was in session:

[13] Jesup's reports are summarized in Ingersoll's *Second War*, II, 235–39.

[14] J. A. Hamilton says, in his *Reminiscences*, p. 42, that a clique of New York Federalists, headed by William W. Van Ness, "sympathized with the Hartford Convention; and endeavored to carry the State of New York into that disloyal movement." Cf. J. D. Hammond, *Polit. Hist. of New York*, I, 388–89. Rufus King had confidence in the Convention, on account of the character of its members, and believed, like Otis, that it was necessary to prevent the resentment in New England from breaking out in open resistance (*King*, V, 444–48). On the other hand, Otis's old friends, Judge Benson and General Van Rensselaer, were decidedly opposed to the movement — the Judge had "half a mind to go to New England to set them right" (*King*, V, 431). The New Jersey Federalists held a Peace Convention at Trenton in July, 1814, at which the addresses and resolutions indicated a sympathy with the New England Federalists (Lucius H. Stockton, *Address delivered before the Convention of Friends of Peace*). The Maryland Federalists were split into two factions, one of which, led by J. H. Thomas, sympathized with the Hartford Convention, and secured some severe resolutions against the Conscription Bill in the House of Delegates on January 2, 1815. The other, led by Roger B. Taney, wished to support the war, and regarded the Convention as treasonable (L. G. Tyler, *R. B. Taney*, I, 107). Professor C. H. Ambler states in his *Sectionalism in Virginia*, p. 96, that the Virginia Federalists disapproved of the Hartford Convention. But two of their principal organs, the Alexandria *Gazette* and the Winchester *Gazette*, expressed decided approval of its report (January 17 and January 21, quoted in Boston *Advertiser*, January 23 and February 3, 1815). Among the Federalists of North Carolina the Convention found "no answering echo," according to H. M. Wagstaff, *State Rights in North Carolina*, 39. A letter of William R. Davie in *James Sprunt Historical Monographs*, no. 7, p. 71, indicates that this attitude was due to the fact that they were so out of touch with New England Federalism that they believed its object to be secession.

I care nothing now about your actings and doings. Your decree of conscription and your levy of contributions are alike indifferent to one whose eyes are fixed on a Star in the East, which he believes to be the day spring of freedom and glory. The traitors and madmen assembled at Hartford will, I believe, if not too tame and timid, be hailed hereafter as the patriots and sages of their day and generation. May the blessing of God be upon them, to inspire their counsels and prosper their resolutions!

The six-and-twenty members of the Hartford Convention were a truly distinguished body of men. Foremost in reputation was George Cabot, then sixty-two years of age, whose large stature, white locks, and air of calm dignity reminded young men of their traditional idea of Washington. In order to accept his election as delegate, Cabot emerged from the seclusion in which he had voluntarily remained since 1796. After Hamilton's death, he might have assumed the active leadership of the Federal party, but his indolent, easy-going nature shunned responsibility, and preferred to brood over national problems in retirement at Brookline. "Why can't you and I let the world ruin itself in its own way?" said Cabot to Pickering in 1813, a sentiment that showed the radical difference between the natures of the two men; for Timothy Pickering would have sacrificed his life, if need be, to transmit unimpaired to his descendants the ancient institutions of New England. Once a member of the Essex Junto, Cabot's theories had so softened with years that his presence at Hartford was a guarantee that moderation and sound judgment would guide the Convention in its task. Old John Adams never judged a fellow man more unjustly than on that memorable occasion in December, 1814, when he thrust his hand between the but-

tons of his ample coat, and exclaimed to the astonished young Ticknor, "Thank God, thank God! George Cabot's close-buttoned ambition has broke out at last. He wants to be President of New England, sir![15]

Cabot, as the only original founder of the Federal party in the Convention, was given its presidency; but the real command was expected to devolve on Otis. His prominence in the whole state rights movement in New England since 1804, his long experience in public life, and the fact that the Convention project had issued from his committee in the General Court of Massachusetts, all marked him as the suitable leader in this situation. Otis, just past his forty-ninth birthday, was now at the prime of life. Samuel S. Goodrich thus describes his appearance and manner while at Hartford:

> The impression he made on my mind on the occasion I am describing, was deep and lasting. He had not the lofty Washingtonian dignity of George Cabot, nor the grave suavity of Chauncey Goodrich; he was in fact, of quite a different type — easy, polished, courtly — passing from one individual to another, and carrying a line of light from countenance to countenance, either by his playful wit or gracious personal allusions. He seemed to know everybody, and to be able to say to each precisely the most appropriate thing that could be said. He was one of the handsomest men of his time; his features being classically cut, and still full of movement and expression. To me — who had seen little of society beyond Connecticut, and accustomed therefore to the rather staid manners of public men — Mr. Otis was an object of strange, yet admiring curiosity. I knew him well, some years after and when I was more conversant with the world, and he still seemed to me a very high example of the finished gentleman of the assiduous and courtly school.[16]

The third delegate from Massachusetts, a man who like Cabot emerged from long retirement in order to keep the

[15] *Life, etc., of George Ticknor*, I, 13. [16] Goodrich, *Recollections*, II, 39.

Convention in conservative channels, was Nathan Dane,[17] of Beverly. He is chiefly remembered for his authorship, in the Old Congress, of the Territorial Ordinance of 1787, the first official action of the United States against negro slavery. The fourth member of the Massachusetts delegation was Judge Joseph Lyman,[18] of Northampton, a kindly, dignified, and religious man, not especially learned or gifted, but prominent as a leader of the Federal party in the intensely Federal district of Old Hampshire. As the man who summoned the Northampton meeting of January 19, 1814, to which we have traced the popular demand for the Hartford Convention, his appointment was most fitting.

Of the eight remaining Massachusetts delegates, Timothy Bigelow, of Medford,[19] was probably the only one associated with the Pickering wing of the Federal party. A distinguished member of the Suffolk Bar, he had been chosen for the sixth time, in 1814, Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. William Prescott,[20] of Boston, a classmate of Otis, best known as the son of Colonel Prescott of Bunker Hill fame, and the father of William H. Prescott, the distinguished historian, was also

[17] Nathan Dane, (1752–1835); Harvard 1778, LL.D. 1816, and founder of the Dane Professorship in Law; author of a *Digest of American Law;* member of the Continental Congress, 1785–88.

[18] Joseph Lyman (1767–1847); Yale, 1783; from 1798 to 1844 held office as sheriff, clerk of courts, judge of probate, and judge of the court of common pleas; at one time state representative; member of the Constitutional Convention of 1820. See chap. XXIII, note 13.

[19] Timothy Bigelow (1767–1821); Harvard, 1786; in one branch or the other of the General Court from 1790 to 1820; Speaker of the House, 1805–06, 1808–10, and 1812–20. See chap. XXIV, note 28.

[20] William Prescott (1762–1844); born in the Prescott homestead in Pepperell; Harvard, 1783, LL.D. 1815, and overseer and member of the corporation; studied law under Nathan Dane; opened a law office at Salem in 1789; moved to Boston in 1808; in 1818 succeeded Otis on the bench of common pleas in Suffolk County; member of the Constitutional Convention of 1820.

a prominent lawyer, and for twenty-five years served constantly in the state legislature or council. George Bliss,[21] an able lawyer of Springfield, was a minor leader of Connecticut Valley Federalism who had left Governor Strong's Council to come to Hartford. Joshua Thomas[22] of Plymouth and Hodijah Baylies[23] of Dighton, were both officers in the Revolution, and judges of probate in their respective counties; Daniel Waldo[24] was a wealthy merchant of Worcester. The two members from the District of Maine, both comparatively young men, with their careers well before them, were Stephen Longfellow, Jr.,[25] of Portland and Samuel Sumner Wilde,[26] of Hallowell. The former, the father of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, was a member of the General Court that called the Hartford Convention; the latter, a lawyer and politician who had been recently a member of the Governor's Council.

Connecticut sent seven delegates to the Hartford Convention, men of the same stamp as the members from

[21] George Bliss (1764–1830); Yale, 1784, LL.D. (Harvard), 1823; member of the Northampton Peace Convention of 1812, and of the Constitutional Convention of 1820.

[22] Joshua Thomas (1751–1821); Harvard, 1772; aide to General Thomas at Ticonderoga and the siege of Boston; member of the General Court in 1781; president of the Pilgrim Society.

[23] Hodijah Baylies (1757–1843); Harvard, 1777, aide to General Lincoln in 1778, and to Washington in 1782 with rank of lieutenant-colonel. Collector of the port of Dighton for many years, until removed by Madison in 1809.

[24] Daniel Waldo (1763–1845); born in Boston. A hardware merchant; wealthy and charitable; served with reluctance in the state senate from 1816 to 1818.

[25] Stephen Longfellow (1775–1849); Harvard, 1798, LL.D. (Bowdoin), 1828; admitted to the bar in 1801; member of the Maine Constitutional Convention of 1819; member of Congress, 1823–25; president of the Maine Historical Society.

[26] Samuel S. Wilde (1771–1855); born at Taunton; Dartmouth 1789, LL.D. (Harvard), 1841; represented Warren (Maine) in the General Court, 1798–99; member of the Constitutional Convention of 1820 (having moved to Newburyport); associate justice of the Supreme Judicial Court, 1815–50.

Massachusetts. "At the head of the Connecticut delegation stood his honor Chauncey Goodrich,[27] whose blanched locks and noble features had long been conspicuous in the halls of national legislation."[28] A colleague of Otis in the Fifth and Sixth Congresses, later a United States Senator, he was lieutenant-governor of Connecticut at the time of the Convention. James Hillhouse,[29] of New Haven, a man over six feet high, with a large bony frame, and "something of the Indian in his physiognomy and walk," had served in the Revolution, in Congress from 1791 to 1795, and in the Senate from that date until 1811. Zephaniah Swift,[30] of Windham, "a large man, of strong manly features, without grace of manner or expression," was chief justice of Connecticut in 1814. John Treadwell,[31] of Farmington, "short and bulbous about the waist, with a certain air of importance in his face and carriage," was the oldest man in the Convention, and a veteran in public service: he had been a member of the Continental Congress, lieu-

[27] Chauncey Goodrich (1759–1815); born at Durham; Yale, 1776; admitted to the bar in 1781. Besides his national service he was frequently a member of the state legislature and executive council, and in 1812 was mayor of Hartford.

[28] G. H. Hollister, *Connecticut*, II, 503.

[29] James Hillhouse (1754–1832); Yale, 1773, and treasurer of the college from 1782 until his death. His national service was preceded by nine years in the State Legislature. Hillhouse introduced a set of extraordinary amendments to the Constitution in the Senate in 1808. When accused later of being privy to the secession plot of 1804, he denied the charge categorically.

[30] Zephaniah Swift (1759–1823); born at Wareham, Massachusetts; published a *System of the Laws of Connecticut* in 1795; member of Congress, 1793–97; secretary to the French mission (the post that Otis wanted) in 1799–1800; associate justice of the Superior Court of Connecticut, 1801–06, and chief justice, 1806–19. He subsequently emigrated to Ohio.

[31] John Treadwell (1745–1823); Yale, 1767, and LL.D., 1800. Took an active part in the Revolution; member of the Continental Congress in 1785; of the state assembly and council, 1776–97 and 1811–18; judge of probate, 1789–1809; lieutenant-governor, 1798–1809; governor, 1809–11; member of the ratifying convention of 1788 and the Constitutional Convention of 1818; a noted scholar, and author of several theological works.

tenant-governor of Connecticut for ten, and governor for two, years.

Nathaniel Smith,[32] "to listen to whom, when he spoke in the convention, Harrison Gray Otis turned back as he was leaving the chamber, and stood gazing in silent admiration, unconscious of the flight of time,"[33] was likewise a jurist and an ex-member of Congress. The career of Calvin Goddard,[34] of Norwich, was parallel; he was a member of the executive council in 1814, and appointed to the bench the following year. The youngest member of the Connecticut delegation was Roger Minott Sherman,[35] of Fairfield, a nephew of Roger Sherman, eminent as a lawyer and a scholar, and member of the state legislature in 1814.

From Rhode Island came a delegation no less distinguished than that of her sister states. At the head of the list stood Colonel Samuel Ward,[36] grandson of a colonial governor, son of the founder of Brown University, officer in the Revolution, member of the Annapolis Convention of 1786, and successful merchant in

[32] Nathaniel Smith (1762–1822); a native of Woodbury; in the state legislature, 1789–95 and 1799–1805; member of Congress, 1795–99; judge of the Supreme Court of Connecticut, 1806–19; M.A. (Yale), 1795.

[33] Hollister, II, 504.

[34] Calvin Goddard (1768–1842); Dartmouth, 1786; studied law under Oliver Ellsworth; in the state legislature, 1791–1801; member of Congress, 1801–05; of the executive council, 1808–15; judge of Superior Court, 1815–18; state attorney, 1818–23; mayor of Norwich for seventeen years.

[35] Roger M. Sherman (1773–1844); born in Woburn, Massachusetts; Yale, 1792, LL.D. 1829; moved in 1807 to Fairfield, where he practiced law. He was a member of the state legislature, 1814–18; judge of the Superior Court, 1840–42, and took an active part in the affairs of the American Colonization Society.

[36] Samuel Ward (1756–1832); born in Westerly; Brown, 1771; entered the army and was captured in Arnold's Quebec expedition of 1775; exchanged, and rose to the rank of lieutenant-colonel in 1779. Engaged in the East India trade; removed to New York in 1790; returned to Rhode Island in 1808; and later retired to an estate in Jamaica, Long Island. Among his descendants were "Sam" Ward, Julia Ward Howe, and F. Marion Crawford.

New York. Daniel Lyman,[37] of Newport, belonged to the same Northampton family as Joseph Lyman. He was president of the Society of the Cincinnati and chief justice of Rhode Island. Benjamin Hazard,[38] the third delegate from Rhode Island, was Daniel Lyman's son-in-law. Hazard represented Newport in the Rhode Island assembly from 1809 to 1840 without a break. "He was very swarthy, with long frizzled hair," writes Goodrich, "and I particularly noticed him for the singularity of his appearance." Edward Manton,[39] a merchant of Johnston, and a state senator, "a man of modest and unobtrusive merit," according to Dwight, completes the list of the twenty-three members chosen by state legislatures.

Of the three county members from New Hampshire and Vermont, Benjamin West[40] of Charlestown, a veteran of the New Hampshire Bar, "was then sixty-eight years old: his form tall but slender, his hair white, long, and flowing, his countenance serene, his voice full of feeling and melody."[41] A persistent refuser of offices, he had been elected to the Federal Convention of 1787, and twice to Congress, but declined, and he also refused an appointment as attorney-general and another to the bench. As with George Cabot, it was only the gravity of

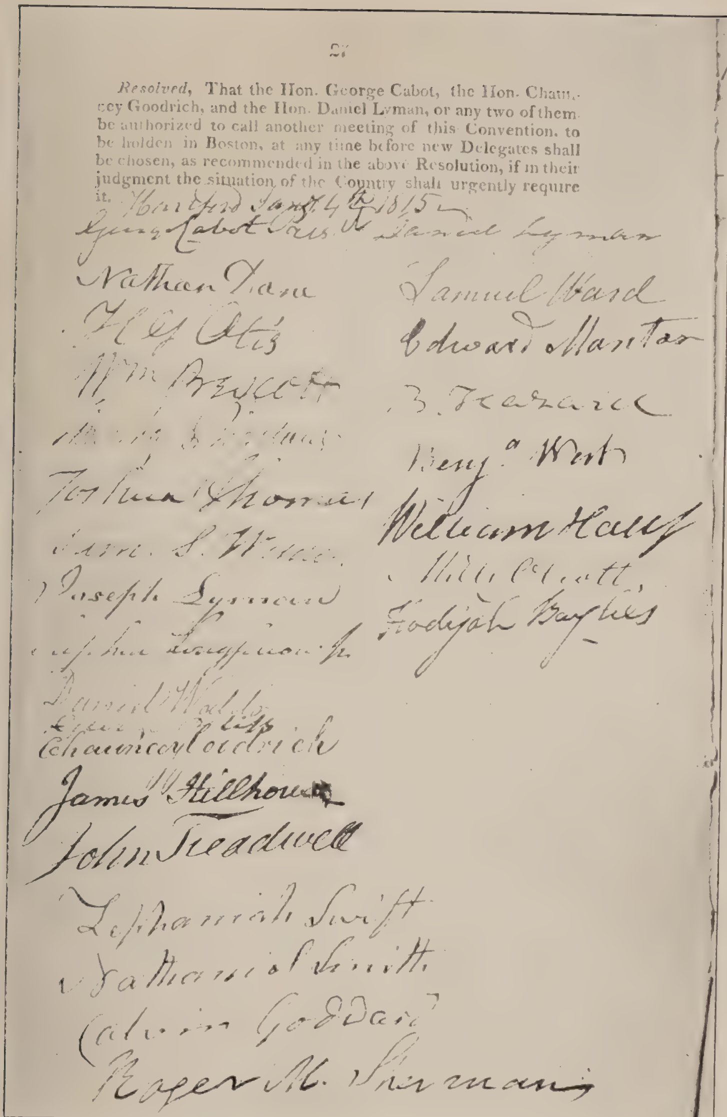
[37] Daniel Lyman (1756–1830); born in Durham, Connecticut; Yale, 1776; an officer in the Revolution; surveyor and inspector-general of Newport 1790–1802; chief justice of Rhode Island, 1812–16; after which he removed to Providence and engaged in cotton manufacturing.

[38] Benjamin Hazard (1770–1841); born in Middletown; Brown, 1792. As the Rhode Island legislature, under the old charter, was chosen semi-annually, Benjamin Hazard had the distinction of winning no less than sixty-two popular elections between 1809 and 1840.

[39] Edward Manton (1760–1820).

[40] Benjamin West (1746–1817); born in Rochester, Massachusetts; Harvard, 1768; practiced law at Charlestown from 1773. The dates of the elections and appointments that he refused were (in order given above); 1787, 1781, 1789, 1786, 1802.

[41] Goodrich, II, 43.



27

Resolved, That the Hon. George Cabot, the Hon. Chauncey Goodrich, and the Hon. Daniel Lyman, or any two of them be authorized to call another meeting of this Convention, to be holden in Boston, at any time before new Delegates shall be chosen, as recommended in the above Resolution, if in their judgment the situation of the Country shall urgently require it. Hartford Jany 4th 1815

Geo. Cabot Presdt — Daniel Lyman

Nathan Dane	Samuel Ward
H. G. Otis	Edward Manton
Wm Prescott	B. Hazard
Timo. Bigelow	Benja West
Joshua Thomas	William Hall Jr
Saml. S. Wilde	Mills Olcott
Joseph Lyman	Hodijah Baylies
Stephen Longfellow Jr	
Daniel Waldo	
George Bliss	
Chauncey Goodrich	
James Hillhouse	
John Treadwell	
Zephaniah Swift	
Nathaniel Smith	
Calvin Goddard	
Roger M. Sherman	

SIGNATURES OF MEMBERS OF THE HARTFORD CONVENTION

the situation that made him accept his election to the Hartford Convention. Mills Olcott,[42] the member from Grafton County, was a lawyer of Hanover. William Hall, Jr.,[43] the one member from Vermont, was a prominent merchant, residing at Bellows Falls, and a member of Governor Chittenden's Council.

Such were the twenty-five men who assembled with Otis at Hartford to remedy the grievances of New England. They formed from every point of view an assembly of notables. Almost every man was distinguished above the average for high character, and for public service of some sort, in the Revolution, on the bench and at the bar, in the legislatures of their states and of the United States. In face of such records Jefferson's stigmatizing of Otis and his colleagues as "Marats, Dantons, and Robespierres"[44] seems rather wide of the mark. Otis's statement, which roused the ire of John Quincy Adams, that they "fairly represented whatever of moral, intellectual, or patriotic worth, is to be found in the character of the New England community," [45] is also inaccurate, for the soldiers and sailors and diplomats of New England who were striving for national existence were not represented there. The Hartford Convention, in fact, represented a class — the ruling aristocracy of New England. Twenty-two of the twenty-six were college graduates and lawyers, and nine of this number were jurists. They were not all graybeards as Goodrich represents them; ten, including Otis, were under fifty years of age, and not one so old as seventy: the average

[42] Mills Olcott (1774–1845); Dartmouth, 1790, its treasurer in 1816, and a trustee in 1821; father-in-law of Rufus Choate.

[43] William Hall, Jr. (1774–1831); moderator in all town meetings from 1815 to 1827, and though not a politician accepted an election to the state legislature in 1826 in order to put through some measure of local importance.

[44] Randall, *Jefferson*, III, 420.

[45] *N. E. Federalism*, 274.

of their ages was fifty-two. Otis's hair was still jet black, though it did not remain so long when he became the Convention's self-appointed defender.

Eminent as undoubtedly were the characters and the records of the members, we must not make the mistake of using this distinction as a leading argument for the high and honorable character of their acts and motives. The stock argument of the Convention's apologists for a generation afterward, against the charge of premeditated secession, was to roll off a few sonorous names — Harrison Gray Otis, Samuel Sumner Wilde, Roger Minott Sherman — and then proceed to beg the question: "We ask any candid, honest man, if he believes in his conscience, that these . . . persons above named, were capable of plotting a conspiracy against the National Government?"[46] This argument is fundamentally unsound, for our whole history shows that patriotic and honorable men may consider treason to the Union a sacred duty. Timothy Pickering, a friend of Washington, and a veteran of the Revolution, whose friends were wont to prate of his Roman virtue, believed it his duty, in 1804, to plot with Aaron Burr a dissolution of the Union; and in 1814, he conceived it to be the patriotic course to let the ship of state run aground, so that he and his friends could rush in and rescue the remains. The Revolutionary antecedents of some of the members were a stimulus to resist oppression from whatever source, rather than to bear and forbear for the sake of the Union. But there was this quality in their characters that promised well for the Union — they were all, with the exception of Bigelow and possibly Bliss, moderate Federalists. John Lowell wrote Pickering "They are not

[46] *Otis' Letters, 53–55, Short Account,* 21; cf. *Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc.,* II, 7. W. A. Beers, *R. M. Sherman;* H. C. Lodge, *Cabot,* 506.

calculated for bold measures," and Otis certainly was not of the stuff from which revolutionists are made. The Massachusetts Legislature had taken care not to choose prominent radicals, like Lowell, Quincy, Blake, Fessenden, and Putnam.

The Convention held its sessions in the council chamber of the old State House, now the City Hall of Hartford. At the first session, on the morning of December 15, George Cabot was elected president, Theodore Dwight secretary, and a committee was appointed to draw up rules. Otis made the motion, — the only motion, sneered John Quincy Adams, to which the name of the mover is given in the Journal, — that the Convention be opened with prayer. In the afternoon the committeee reported a set of rules, which were adopted, and a new committee of five, including Otis, was appointed to report on "what subjects will be proper to be considered by this Convention."

One of the rules adopted in the afternoon session of December 15 was that "The most inviolable secrecy shall be observed by each member of this Convention, including the Secretary, as to all propositions, debates and proceedings thereof, until this injunction shall be suspended or altered." Stephen Longfellow, Jr., wrote his wife the following day: "As the propriety of the regulation must appear obvious to you, it is unnecessary to explain the reasons which induced its adoption." [47] But a letter that Mrs. Longfellow wrote her husband from Portland, on December 17, shows that the mother of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow had more common sense than four-and-twenty "Wise men of the East":

> Papa has been here, and Mr. Lewis, and Miss Holland and the Mess. Frothingham sent word they would come and take

[47] Longfellow MSS.

tea. Papa was glad you were gone. He thinks it would be best to deliberate with closed doors, from prudential motives, and because a concourse would put a restraint on the freedom of debate, and the business would be done in half the time without spectators. You might afterward make as full communication to the public as you thought proper. But would not a secret consultation give more plausibility to the cry of treason, that will be raised. We are assured here that we shall have peace before spring.[48]

"Papa," General Peleg Wadsworth, was a veteran Federalist, in whose mind, doubtless, the considerations which demanded secrecy were those which seemed so obvious to his son-in-law. Otis, in fact, afterwards explained that the motives for secrecy were the wish to escape pressure from public opinion, and the desire to facilitate business.[49] Secret sessions, moreover, were in accordance with the best Federalist traditions; it was a privilege, not a right of the people to hear the debates of the Wise and the Good.[50] But the wise men at Hartford would have done well to have made some concession to public opinion, for the effect of their secretiveness was just what Mrs. Longfellow predicted. Concealment made possible the charge that things were debated and planned at Hartford that never would bear the light, and furnished the keystone to the conspiracy theory of the Hartford Convention.

[48] Longfellow MSS.

[49] Possibly another reason was the fear of a demonstration in the galleries from the Democrats, who were sufficiently numerous in Hartford to support a newspaper, the *American Mercury*. They celebrated the arrival of the members in Hartford by hanging flags at half-mast and tolling bells, and during one of the sessions the town crier, a facetious old Irishman, marched around the State House with a body of United States troops, playing the "Rogues' March." Goodrich, *Recollections*, II, 53.

[50] The sessions of the Federal Convention of 1787 were secret; the United States Senate held secret sessions until 1795, when public opinion compelled a change, and the upper houses of some of the state legislatures remained closed to the public until a much later date.

All available evidence points to the conclusion that the Hartford Convention, in spite of its precautions to insure secrecy, had nothing to conceal. After remaining four years silent to the charge of plotting secession, Otis conceived the idea of stopping the mouth of calumny by publishing the official Journal of the Convention. He sent a circular letter to all surviving members, requesting their permission for the deposit of the Journal, of which Cabot was custodian, in some public place.[51] Every letter received in reply [52] showed entire willingness, on the part of the members, to publish not only the Journal, but everything that went on behind closed doors at Hartford. From Joshua Thomas, on October 26, 1818, came this statement:

By the request of Mr. Otis, I write to inform you,[53] of my entire acquiescence in giving the utmost publicity, to the private journal of the proceedings of the Hartford Convention. I do this most cordially, because I devoutly believe, that no body of men ever existed, whose political motives and views were more pure & patriotic than the members of this calumniated convention. What national good they might have effected, what national evil they might have averted, it is indeed impossible to say, if the war had been protracted a year or two longer than it was.

[51] "Till then" (1819), says C. J. Ingersoll, "George Cabot, the mysteriarch, remained, and wherefore? sole keeper of what was but a faint suggestion of the actual deliberations, suggestions, votes, motives and proceedings of the ill-starred Hartford Convention, in its conception, transactions and termination equally unwise unfortunate and contemptible" (*Second War* (1849), II, 233). Ingersoll's style is as extraordinary as the setting of horrors in which he places the Convention is amusing. Any one who wishes an entertaining half-hour is advised to glance over his chapter on the Hartford Convention.

[52] There were thirteen responses in all; Manton and Hazard did not reply, and verbal permission was received from the others. Hillhouse, Smith, Swift, and Sherman at first objected to bringing forth the Journal, on the ground that its publication would not stop the slanders against the Convention, and would look like an "admission that our conduct requires some explanation or apology." Daniel Lyman's reply is printed in Otis's *One of the Convention*, and Samuel Ward's in *Historical Magazine*, XII, 22.

[53] The letter is addressed to George Cabot.

From Calvin Goddard, November 18:

I have no great expectation that the senseless clamour which has been excited for sinister purposes, will be much affected by the proposed measure. Personally, however I have no objection to the publication of the Journal, and of every act I ever did, and every word I ever said on that subject, and if you & other Gentlemen think its publication will have a useful tendency you have my entire approbation of doing it.

From Hodijah Baylies, October 24:

I see no objection to the publication; for surely nothing was done, or even said, that I recollect, which might not have been proclaimed to the world.

But the publication of the Journal[54] failed to silence the charge of secret plottings. It was objected that the Journal recorded no debates — no legislative journal ever does — and that it insufficiently indicated the subjects of debate. On the second point, we have conclusive evidence to the contrary, in the affirmations of Cabot, supported by Otis, Sherman, and Dwight, "that the twenty-seven written pages which compose it, and the printed report, comprise a faithful and complete record of all the motions, resolutions, votes, and proceedings of that Convention."[55] As to the specific charge that the Convention laid plans for a secession campaign, the testimony is equally conclusive. Dwight insists:

That no proposition was made in the Convention to divide the Union, to organize the New England States into a separate government, or to form an alliance with Great Britain, or any other foreign power.[56]

[54] It was first printed in 1823, in various Federalist newspapers, and in T. Lyman's *Short Account*. The original, after many vicissitudes, is now in the Massachusetts Archives.

[55] H. C. Lodge, *Cabot*, 509.

[56] *History of the Hartford Convention*, 405.

Sherman testified under oath, in 1831,

There was not, according to the best of my recollection, a single motion, resolution, or subject of debate, but what appears in the printed journal or report.[57]

Otis wrote Theodore Dwight, October 15, 1828:

You well know that nothing was there agitated requiring even temporary secrecy for any other reason than the inexpediency of impairing the interest and effect of the final report by daily anticipation.

So much, then, for what the Convention did not discuss; now let us see what actually was discussed and effected. Otis opened the debates with the only recorded speech made at the Convention. According to Roger M. Sherman,[58]

as soon as the Convention was organized, Mr. Otis . . . proposed, after some prefatory remarks, that it should be recommended to our several legislatures to present a petition to the Congress of the United States, praying that they would consent that the New England States, or so many of them as should agree together for that purpose, might unite in defending themselves against the public enemy; that so much of the National revenue as should be collected in these States, should be appropriated to the expense of that defence; that the amount so appropriated should be credited to the United States; and that the U. States should agree to pay whatever should be expended beyond that amount.

The letters of Otis and Stephen Longfellow to their respectives wives[59] give us pleasant accounts of the informal side of the Convention, but are silent regarding

[57] His speech in the case of Conn. *v.* Whitman Mead, printed in Goodrich, *Recollections*, II, 28.

[58] Goodrich, II, 27. A diary of Sherman's, stolen several years ago from his MSS. in the Bridgeport Scientific Society, probably contained notes on the debates from which this résumé of Otis's speech was compiled.

[59] See chap. XXVIII.

the debates and committee meetings, for which we still must refer to the official Journal. The first important event recorded by this document is a report on December 16 of the committee on subjects, consisting of Goodrich, Otis, Daniel Lyman, Swift, and Dane. They deemed it expedient for the Convention to consider the following subjects: (1) the constitutional conflict on the militia question between the United States and the New England States; (2) the President's refusal to pay the militia called out for purposes of defense, but not placed under United States officers; (3) the bills concerning conscription and enlistment of minors; (4) the expenditure of revenue for purposes of conquest; and (5) the necessity of the separate states to undertake their own defense, and the manner of accomplishing it.[60]

The striking point about this report is its failure to mention the most vital subject in regard to which the Convention was called upon by the General Court of Massachusetts to deliberate — the amendment of the Constitution. Further, it touches no New England grievance not immediately connected with the war. Does the acceptance of this report by the Convention indicate that a majority of the delegates wished to confine their activities to the immediate and pressing questions there enumerated, and neither revive ancient grievances nor demand guarantees for the future? Did they wish the common defense to be the "main object" of the Convention, as Otis always claimed it had been? If such were the case, Otis and the Convention very soon changed their minds. A second committee of five, consisting of Smith, Otis, Goddard, West, and Hazard, which was appointed "to prepare and report a general project of such meas-

[60] This and future references to the Journal are taken from the version in Dwight, *Hartford Convention*, 383–99.

ures as it may be proper for the Convention to adopt," proposed on December 20 not only a statement of grievances on the militia question, and recommendations to the states for their defense, but also "That it is expedient to recommend to the several state legislatures, certain amendments to the constitution of the United States, hereafter enumerated, to be by them adopted and proposed."

By adopting, on December 24, after several days of discussion, this report of the Committee on a General Project, the Convention officially sanctioned the subject of constitutional amendment, and definitely settled its entire program.[61] The Report on a General Project was immediately referred to a new committee of seven, with orders to use it as a basis for the Final Report of the Convention, "illustrative of the principles and reasons which have induced the Convention to adopt the results to which they have agreed." The appointment of Otis as chairman of this committee, of which the other members were Smith, Swift, Dane, Prescott, West, and Hazard, confirms the tradition that he was the most energetic and influential person in the Convention. He was the only member appointed to all three of the major committees. Smith, Swift, Dane, West, and Hazard, who served on two of the three, possibly formed a directing clique within the Convention, under his leadership.[62] Otis had already complained to his wife that he

[61] Cf. Longfellow's letter of December 26, in chap. XXVIII.

[62] It will be noticed that Dane was the only Massachusetts delegate besides Otis who was appointed to more than one of the major committees. This fact seems strange when it is remembered that Massachusetts called the Convention and since 1808 had been constantly at the head of New England sectionalism. Possibly a majority of the Massachusetts delegates agreed with Bigelow and Bliss in desiring more radical action than the majority, and Otis, Cabot, and Dane combined with the others to force a moderate course. Bliss wrote Otis, October 31, 1818: "I know I proposed a different course from the one adopted."

was being worked harder than ever before in his lifetime, so that it is no wonder that his letters to her cease after December 24.

For almost a week the Convention marked time, awaiting the report of Otis's committee, which finally, on December 30, handed in the result of its labors — the first draft of the Report of the Hartford Convention. It is a great pity that no copy of this document has been preserved, for the Journal indicates that considerable alteration was made before its adoption on January 3, 1815. After that date only routine business was transacted, and on the morning of January 5, it was voted "that this Convention adjourn without day."

CHAPTER XXVI

HARTFORD CONVENTION: V. THE REPORT

January 3, 1815.

On January 6, 1815, the Report of the Hartford Convention was published in an "extra" of the Hartford *Courant*, and soon circulated throughout the country by the press and in numerous pamphlet editions.[1] The main Report, which takes up about twenty-three octavo pages, contains an arraignment of the policy of Jefferson and Madison, a statement of the grievances of New England, and a discussion of remedies. It is followed by a series of recommendations to the New England States in the form of resolutions, and by several "Schedules" of statistics, called "Statements prepared and published by order of the Convention," which were intended to illustrate and justify the text.[2]

[1] The title of all separate editions is *The Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the states of . . . convened at Hartford, in the State of Connecticut, December 15th, 1814.* A convenient but inaccurate version is found in *American History Leaflets*, no. 35, following the text given in Dwight, 352–79. Extracts cited below from the Report have been collated with the official copy in the Massachusetts Archives.

[2] These "Statements" may be found only in contemporary editions of the Report, and in not all of them. Nathan Dane was in all probability the member especially charged with their preparation. Among the Otis papers there are, in his hand, two additional "Schedules," which were not printed by the Convention (they will be found in chap. xxviii), and in the Connecticut Historical Society is a formidable collection of government documents and manuscript statistics, "left in Hartford, at the time of the Hartford Convention, by a member of that body," all endorsed, and in part drawn up, by Dane. They contain lists of imports and exports; treasury reports; a draft of Giles's militia bill; voluminous "notes as to imports, duties, etc."; a recent statement of the Postmaster-General concerning moneys disbursed for bounties; and several documents on the militia question, including a manuscript copy of the opinion of

Viewed purely as a literary production, the Report takes a high rank among American state papers. Tradition assigns the authorship to Otis. He never, so far as I know, claimed or disclaimed the honor, and his manuscripts throw no light on the subject; but since the document issued from a committee of which he was chairman, there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the tradition. In any case, the Report expressed Otis's views, for he never failed to defend each and every word of it. It presents, furthermore, the last united expression of New England Federalism, and as such deserves our close analysis.

The Report commences as follows:

> The Convention is deeply impressed with a sense of the arduous nature of the commission which they were appointed to execute, of devising the means of defence against dangers, and of relief from oppressions proceeding from the acts of their own Government, without violating constitutional principles, or disappointing the hopes of a suffering and injured people.

Respect is then paid to the violent section of the Federal party, by acknowledging that

> a sentiment prevails to no inconsiderable extent . . . that the time for a change [of government] is at hand. Those who so believe, regard the evils which surround them as intrinsic and incurable defects in the Constitution. They yield to a persuasion, that no change, at any time, or on any occasion, can aggravate the misery of their country. This opinion may ultimately prove to be correct. But as the evidence on which it rests is not yet conclusive, and as measures adopted upon the assumption of its certainty might be irrevocable, some general considerations are submitted, in the hope of reconciling all to a course of moderation and firmness, which may save them from

the Supreme Court of Massachusetts on the militia case. These were evidently the sources from which the "Schedules," and probably some of the statements in the body of the Report, were compiled.

the regret incident to sudden decisions, probably avert the evil, or at least insure consolation and success in the last resort.

The Convention recognizes that the Constitution, "competent to all the objects of national prosperity" under a "Wise and virtuous Administration," has been made an instrument of misgovernment and oppression under a weak and wicked one. "But to attempt upon every abuse of power to change the Constitution, would be to perpetuate the evils of revolution." Most of our present troubles are due to the "fierce passions which have convulsed the nations of Europe," having "passed the ocean," and entered "the bosoms of our citizens." These causes of discord have vanished, and there is every indication that Southern hostility to commerce has burnt itself out. In this respect the author of the Report proved an excellent prophet.

Finally, if the Union be destined to dissolution, by reason of the multiplied abuses of bad administrations, it should, if possible, be the work of peaceable times, and deliberate consent. . . . Events may prove that the causes of our calamities are deep and permanent . . . they may be traced to implacable combinations of individuals, or of States, to monopolize power and office, and to trample without remorse upon the rights and interests of commercial sections of the Union. Whenever it shall appear that these causes are radical and permanent, a separation, by equitable arrangement, will be preferable to an alliance by constraint, among nominal friends, but real enemies, inflamed by mutual hatred and jealousy, and inviting by intestine divisions, contempt, and aggression from abroad. But a severance of the Union by one or more States, against the will of the rest, and especially in a time of war, can be justified only by absolute necessity. These are among the principal objections against precipitate measures tending to disunite the States, and when examined in connection with the farewell address of the Father of his country, they must, it is believed, be deemed conclusive.

Here concludes the most vital section of the Report, in which the Convention showed that it had squarely faced, and rejected, any policy tending toward the dissolution of the Union. This decision is greatly to the members' credit. In spite of the influence of Pickering, Morris, and Lowell, in spite of the loud calls of the New England press for extreme measures, in spite of the accumulative provocation of the past six years, they were able to look into the future and discern that the grievances of New England resulted largely from a temporary state of affairs: the world-wide wars of the Napoleonic era.

Their attitude toward secession was the same as that expressed by Otis's committee report of June 4, 1813, on the admission of Louisiana.[3] As Hare wrote Otis, "a rupture of the Union is the worst evil that could assail us, except a submission to the present order."[4] Should it appear, in the near future, that New England was to be forever throttled in her political desires and circumscribed in her economic interests, the members of the Hartford Convention would be ready to lead their constituents in a policy of secession from the Union. Cool, calculating, and unromantic as this attitude seems, in contrast with the dash and fire of later sectional movements in the South, it was eminently wise and far-seeing, and indicates that the members of the Hartford Convention were on a higher plane of statesmanship than the men responsible for nullification in 1832, or the secessionist leaders of 1861.

With this decision against secession, the Report proceeds "to a consideration, in the first place, of the dangers and grievances which menace an immediate or

[3] See closing pages of chap. xx.

[4] Letter of October 1, 1814, chap. xxviii.

speedy pressure, with a view of suggesting means of present relief." Most prominent among these is the construction the administration put upon the militia question, which "by placing at the disposal of the National Government the lives and services of the great body of the people, enable it at pleasure to destroy their liberties, and erect a military despotism on the ruins." Similar consequences are predicted if the "unconstitutional" and oppressive bills for conscription, and enlistment of minors, should pass. These infractions of the constitution are so "deliberate, dangerous, and palpable," affecting the sovereignty of the states and the liberty of the people, as to make it, in the language of Madison's Resolutions of 1798, "the duty of such a State to interpose its authority for their protection." In the resolutions at the end of the Report, the New England States are advised, in case such acts do pass, to "adopt all such measures as may be necessary effectually to protect the citizens of said States" from their operation and effects. Thus for the third time within six years New England Federalism advanced Jeffersonian principles of state interposition or nullification, in direct contradiction to the Federalism of Washington and Hamilton.

The next subject taken up is the military defense of New England, according to Otis the "main and avowed object." The people of that section, both defenseless and impoverished by the policy of the Administration, will presently find themselves "reduced to the necessity either of submission to a foreign enemy, or of appropriating to their own use, those means of defence which are indispensable to self-preservation" — as Francis Blake had urged in the General Court early in October. "This Convention will not trust themselves to express their conviction of the catastrophe to which

such a state of things inevitably tends." As a way out, an arrangement is suggested, at once "consistent with the honour and interest of the National Government, and the security of these States," by the terms of which Congress may permit the states to assume their own defense, and to pay into the treasury of each state for that purpose a portion of the national taxes there collected. This was Otis's proposition, described in his opening speech.

After drawing a comparison between the Federalist and Jeffersonian periods of our history, highly unflattering to the latter, the Report leads up to the subject of amending the Constitution, by making "a general allusion to the principal outlines of the policy which has produced this vicissitude," namely, sectionalism, political intolerance, hostility towards the judiciary, false economy, corruption in the use of patronage and of "malcontent subjects of the old world," admission of new states in the West, animosity towards Great Britain, partiality towards France, and

> *Lastly and principally.* — A visionary and superficial theory in regard to commerce, accompanied by a real hatred but a feigned regard to its interests, and a ruinous perseverance in efforts to render it an instrument of coercion and war.[5]
>
> But it is not conceivable that the obliquity of any administration could, in so short a period, have so nearly consummated the work of national ruin, unless favored by defects in the Constitution.

Then follows an argument for the adoption of seven amendments to the Constitution, with the avowed object "to strengthen, and if possible to perpetuate, the

[5] Several of the "Schedules" appended to the Report illustrate this statement by statistics showing the loss of revenue, and the destruction of commerce, under the restrictive system.

Union of the States, by removing the grounds of existing jealousies, and providing for a fair and equal representation, and a limitation of powers, which have been misused."

These amendments, which represent traditional demands of New England Federalism, were designed to prevent in the future a recurrence of the grievances under which that section had suffered in the past ten years. They had all been demanded before the Convention met, in town resolutions, in private correspondence of the leaders, and in the newspapers; their adoption, it would be safe to say, was the principal object for which the people of New England suggested the Hartford Convention. Yet Otis and his colleagues must have proposed them more to please their constituents than with any hope of securing their adoption. The only possible way to force them on the Union was to offer the alternative of secession, as the border states did in the peace conference of 1861. Otis and his colleagues were ready for no such alternative; they made no such threat, and when, a few months after the Convention adjourned, their propositions were rudely rejected by a majority of the states, they quietly acquiesced. Their amendments, moreover, were designed to protect a sectional minority, isolated commercially and politically, from majority tyranny; whereas the Convention had indicated, in the first part of the Report, that it did not expect the isolation of New England to be permanent.

The amendments represented, nevertheless, what Otis and his colleagues deemed desirable, even if unattainable, and therefore will justify a brief examination. The first was a proposition to abolish slave representation, by requiring that direct taxes and representatives be apportioned to the states according to their free popula-

tion only. A similar amendment, "Ely's," adopted by the Massachusetts legislature in 1804, had been demanded many times since, and mentioned by the Northampton meeting of January 19, 1814, and the town memorials that followed, as the principal reason for summoning a convention of "Northern and Commercial States." [6] The second amendment provided that no new state should be admitted to the Union without the concurrence of two thirds of both houses of Congress. This proposition was the logical result of the ten years' protest led by Pickering and Quincy against the annexation of Louisiana and the admission of Western communities to statehood, since every state admitted beyond the Alleghanies, had added so much strength to the Democratic and anti-commercial majority in Congress.[7] The Report appeals to the old states against "creating prematurely an overwhelming Western influence," and prophesies that "finally the Western States, multiplied in numbers, and augmented in population, will control the interests of the whole." This amendment, if adopted, would have enabled thirteen senators permanently to have excluded the growing West from statehood.

The two amendments that followed were intended to curtail the power of commercial restriction that had worked so disastrously for New England interests. The first, already proposed by the Massachusetts legislature in 1809, limited the duration of embargoes to sixty days; the second required the consent of two thirds of both houses for the passage of non-intercourse acts. After this completion of the original Northampton demands of January, 1814, came three recommendations to the

[6] Cf. Nathan Dane's "Schedule H" in chap. xxviii.
[7] Cf. Nathan Dane's "Schedule J."

Convention by Timothy Pickering, by the Reverend Joseph Lyman, and by several writers in the newspapers.[8] Amendment number six, recalling Otis's "Wild Irish" speech of 1797, and the Naturalization Act of 1798, provided that no one hereafter naturalized should be eligible to an elective or appointive office under the national government. The object was, of course, to prevent the Democrats from controlling the foreign vote. The two remaining amendments were unexceptionable. Number five, requiring the concurrence of two thirds of both houses of Congress for a declaration of war, would be most desirable to-day. So long as the consent of two thirds of the Senate is necessary to ratify a treaty of peace, it seems more than reasonable to require a similar check on the war power. Last on the list came an intended blow to the Virginia dynasty, an amendment requiring that no President could enjoy more than one term, or the same state provide a President twice in succession. A similar alteration was formally proposed over ninety times between 1815 and 1892, and has found a place in the Democratic platform of 1912. The arguments in the Report in its favor have a strangely familiar sound in the year in which I write.

With the exception of the last two, the improvements that New England proposed to make in the Constitution are little to its credit, and only show how far remote was the Federalism of 1814 from that of 1790. Their adoption would have weakened materially the national government, stimulated other sections to demand

[8] *N. E. Federalism*, 408; Lyman's letter in chap. XXVIII; passage quoted in chap. XXIV, n. 20, from Georgetown *Federal Republican;* and an article by "A Friend to Solid Union" in the Boston *Advertiser*, December 19, 1814. Pickering, and this last writer, also wanted amendments changing the method of appointment to office, placing checks on the power of borrowing money, and prohibiting universal suffrage.

amendments in their own behalf, and constituted a step backwards to the old "rope of sand."

The final resolutions of the Convention recommend the New England States, in case peace should not be concluded, and the arrangement for their defense be refused, to call another convention to meet at Boston in June, 1815, with powers compatible to a "crisis so momentous." Cabot, Goodrich, and Daniel Lyman, moreover, were given the power to call a new meeting of the Hartford Convention, "if in their judgement the situation of the Country shall urgently require it." Cabot, a few months later, explained to Christopher Gore that this was passed in order to have some sort of organized body in existence in case the federal government should totally collapse — a calamity which seemed possible at the close of 1814.[9]

The Report of the Hartford Convention has been criticized as variously as every other aspect of that meeting. John Quincy Adams attempts to read into it an insidious attempt to ripen New England sentiment to the point of sustaining secession.[10] Otis, on the other hand, apostrophizes it as "A manual of elementary principles; — a commentary on WASHINGTON'S Farewell Address — by which, (whatever may be its defects in other respects), the most zealous friend to the Union may be content to live or die." [11] Each estimate is as extravagant as the other. The Report was an attempt both to satisfy enraged New England, and to persuade or frighten

[9] *King*, v, 476. Daniel Webster wrote on December 22, 1814 (*Works*, Nat. ed., xvi, 32), "The Govt. *cannot last*, under this war & in the hands of these men another twelve month. Not that opposition will break it down, but it will break itself down. It will go out. This is my sober opinion."

[10] *N. E. Federalism*, 322, *et seq.* [11] *Otis, Letters*, 52.

the rest of the country into bringing the war to a close, and treating New England more justly in the future. It is more noteworthy for what it does not, than for what it does, recommend. It failed to satisfy the loud demands from the Essex Junto and the Federalist press to consider the Union already dissolved. It failed to adopt Lowell's proposition to declare New England neutral during the remainder of the war. It did not even carry out all the suggestions of Otis's report of October 8. The amendments to the Constitution are requested, not demanded; and no revolutionary mode, such as calling a new Constitutional Convention, is suggested for their adoption. This restraint, in fact, surprised the Convention's bitterest enemies, and disgusted some of its most zealous friends. Gouverneur Morris openly ridiculed it in his letters,[12] and a trace of disappointment appears in the Federalist press of Boston.[13] But the Report certainly had the soothing effect that its authors intended. It rallied the violent wing of the party to the cause of moderation. The *Advertiser* and the *Gazette* hastened to assure their readers that it met with their entire approval, and admitted to their columns no more rash calls for secession or expelling the West from the Union. On the Democratic side, the press was so taken aback by the mild tone of the Report as to comment upon it in terms of qualified praise. The *National Intelligencer*, semi-official organ of the administration, remarked:

> Certain it is, that the proceedings are tempered with more moderation than was to have been expected from the contemporaneous expositions, in the Eastern papers, of the views and objects of the Convention. A separation from the Union,

[12] *N. E. Federalism*, 421; *King*, v, 458.
[13] *Advertiser*, January 21, 1815.

so far from being openly recommended, is the subject only of remote allusion. If the object of calling the Convention really was to propose separation from the Union, they appear to be determined to effect it peaceably, if they can.[14]

Before long the administration press recovered sufficiently from its surprise to construe the Report's moderation as indicating pusillanimity, not patriotism. At a later date, when the conspiracy theory of the Hartford Convention had become well established in the popular consciousness, John Quincy Adams made his brilliant hostile analysis of the Report.[15] He charged, in particular, that the demand was made for permission to use federal taxes for state troops, simply in order to create an issue with the national government, by whose refusal Otis and his friends would be enabled to work up secession sentiment. The injustice of this accusation will shortly be demonstrated by Otis's attitude toward the Peace of Ghent, which ended any chance for carrying out such a conspiracy. Adams's general thesis can be sustained only by the most unfair twisting of the plain meaning of the Report, which threatened ultimate secession, it is true, in case the causes of New England's calamities became "radical and permanent." But no statesman or party of the ante-bellum period of our history failed at some time or other to regard secession as a measure of ultimate resort against sectional oppression. Within five years of the date of the Hartford Convention, threats of secession were heard from Southern Democrats on the floor of Congress; within ten years the Governor of Kentucky threatened secession if the Supreme Court attempted to enforce its decisions.[16] "Is it not a

[14] January 14, 1815. Cf. Philadelphia *Democratic Press*, January 9 and 13; Pittsfield (Mass.) *Sun*, January 12, 1815; Niles, VII, 321.

[15] *N. E. Federalism*, 288 *et seq.*

[16] F. J. Turner, *Rise of the New West*, 164; Ames, *State Docs.*, no. III, 18.

queer world?" wrote Otis in 1820. "Just as I have demonstrated that Massachusetts did not mean to break up the Union; . . . it is about to be shown by Virginia that the thing itself is no crime." Even John Quincy Adams wrote in his diary of that year, some remarks that show he contemplated a course in comparison to which that recommended by the Hartford Convention was indeed, a "commentary on Washington's Farewell Address":

> Perhaps it would have been a wiser as well as a bolder course to have persisted in the restriction upon Missouri, till it should have terminated in a convention of the States to revise and amend the Constitution. This would have produced a new Union of thirteen or fourteen states unpolluted with slavery, with a great and glorious object to effect, that of rallying to their standard the other States by the universal emancipation of their slaves.[17]

The Report of the Hartford Convention was, on the whole, the most temperate and statesmanlike document that ever issued from a sectional movement in the United States.

[17] *Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, v. 12.

CHAPTER XXVII

HARTFORD CONVENTION: VI. THE THREE AMBASSADORS

JANUARY–MAY, 1815, ÆT. 49

THE General Court of Massachusetts lost no time in taking action on the Report of the Hartford Convention. In the Senate it was referred to a committee, which reported on January 25, 1815:

> The Committee entertain a high sense of the wisdom and ability with which the convention of delegates have discharged their arduous trust; while they maintain the principle of State sovereignty, and of the duties which citizens owe to their respective State governments, they give the most satisfactory proofs of attachment to the Constitution of the United States, and to the national Union.

Of the several recommendations made by the Convention to the New England States, the only one requiring immediate attention was the project for interstate defense with the consent of Congress. The enlistment of a state army and a loan of a million dollars to support it had been recommended by Otis's Committee Report of October 8, and authorized by the General Court when it summoned the Hartford Convention; but Governor Strong, finding the Boston banks as unwilling to lend money to their state, for war purposes, as to the United States, had been forced to suspend recruiting and fortification for lack of funds. In the mean time the British continued to occupy eastern Maine, apparently with the intention of holding it permanently, and to menace

Boston. Deeming it imperative, therefore, that the arrangement for local defense suggested by the Hartford Convention be adopted without delay, the General Court authorized the governor, on January 27,

> to appoint three commissioners to proceed immediately to the seat of the National Government, . . . to make an earnest and respectful application to the Government of the United States, requesting their consent to some arrangement, whereby the State of Massachusetts, separately, or in concert with neighbouring States, may be enabled to assume the defence of their territories against the enemy; and that to this end a reasonable portion of the taxes, collected within the said States, may be paid into the respective Treasuries thereof, and appropriated to the payment of the balance due to the said States, and to the future defence of the same.[1]

On the last day of January, Governor Strong appointed as the three commissioners Harrison Gray Otis and his two friends, Thomas Handasyd Perkins and William Sullivan. After the Connecticut legislature had taken similar action on February 4, Governor Smith appointed commissioners for that state.[2]

On the very day, January 27, 1815, that the resolution quoted above passed the General Court, its object was partially fulfilled by President Madison's signing an act of Congress that authorized him to receive into United States service and pay "any corps of troops, which may have been, or may be raised, organized, and officered under the authority of any of the States"; which corps shall be "employed in the State raising the same, or in an adjoining State, and not elsewhere, except with the assent of the Executive of the State so raising the same." [3] This act was an unconditional surrender of the administration to the view of the militia question as expressed in the

[1] *Short Account of the Hartford Convention*, 13.
[2] Goodrich, *Recollections*, II, 46.
[3] *Short Account*, 13.

Report of the Hartford Convention, "whose principal measure," Otis afterwards claimed, was thus "virtually adopted, and the egg that was laid in the darkness of the *Hartford Conclave*, was hatched by daylight under the wing and incubation of the National Eagle." [4] "Had this act of Congress passed before the act of Massachusetts for organizing the convention," he remarked, "*that convention would never have existed.*" [5] The militia question was, indeed, the occasion, though not the cause, of the Hartford Convention. But, it may be well asked, if the Act of January 27, 1815, hatched out the principal measure of the Hartford Convention, why, then, did Governors Strong and Smith appoint commissioners,[6] and why did Otis and his colleagues proceed to Washington? Evidently because the act did not authorize the states to collect federal taxes, and therefore gave New England no opportunity to reimburse itself for its war claims. This purpose was clearly expressed in the last clause but one of the Massachusetts resolution, just quoted. It was to press this point, and not, as John Quincy Adams asserted, to provoke another issue with the national government, that the state commissioners proceeded to Washington.[7] But their mission was destined to almost certain failure. Although the Act of January 27 was a great concession,

[4] *Otis' Letters*, 53. [5] *N. E. Federalism*, 86.

[6] Governor Strong knew, before he appointed the commissioners, that the bill in question had passed Congress. *Ibid.*, 422. Its passage was not known, however, before the Hartford Convention met; the dates given by Adams in his discussion of this question (*Ibid.*, 270) are incorrect.

[7] It is also significant that propositions of this sort were not confined to the Federalist states. The Ohio House of Representatives, on December 22, 1814, passed a resolve requesting the governor to use his influence towards securing permission for the state to apply the direct tax collected within its limits to discharging her claims against the United States. Richmond *Enquirer*, January 3, 1815. But Otis and his friends may have also had a furtive desire to force the government to conclude peace by depriving it of an important source of revenue. Cf. end of Gouverneur Morris's letter, in chap. XXVIII.

it is inconceivable that Madison's administration would have consented to a further, and unconstitutional, resignation of its functions to the states, without the compelling necessity of some national disaster, such as a defeat by the British at New Orleans.

On February 3, 1815, the Massachusetts commissioners departed for Washington. Detained at New Haven over Sunday by the Blue Laws, and at New York by ice in the Hudson, they did not reach Philadelphia until February 9, when Otis wrote his wife:

My dearest friend,

We came here safe about sunset this evening, after breaking down without damage which detained us an hour or two. We lost one day at New York the ice running so violently down the river as to render the passing dangerous and nearly impracticable, but yesterday morning, by watching for an opportunity we came over in a *row* boat with great ease and expedition. The steam boat is occasionally interrupted for a day or two but she is not hauled up *in winter* as Harry supposed. . . . We have been exceedingly amused by the circumstance of *three* black crows, constantly preceding us from N York to Philadelphia. Whenever a flock alighted which was every ten minutes, *Three* of them seperated from the rest and stalked over the ground, waddling and looking wise till they were frighten'd away. These are *ill omen'd* birds and in days when augury was in fashion would have been considered as sad precursors of the three Ambassadors. What the Blackbirds at Washington will say or do with us remains to be seen.

The three black crows were indeed prophetic of the fate of the "three ambassadors." Just three days later, while still on their journey, they were met by news of the battle of New Orleans, that knocked from under them the rotten prop of national calamity on which all hope of their success was based. That Otis clearly realized this situation is indicated on his letter to Mrs. Otis dated "Baltimore Sunday Evg 12 feby."

The *miraculous* success of our arms at N Orleans and the pacific character of the floating rumours of the day, will probably put the Administration upon stilts, and augur no favorable issue to our mission. Still am I sincerely glad for the former occurence, and am quite willing to take peace when it comes, with all the inconveniences resulting from the benefit which bad men will derive from an event, for which they will deserve no credit.

Hard on the heels of the news of New Orleans came that of the Peace of Ghent, which turned not only Otis's mission, but the Hartford Convention itself, into a pitiful farce. Otis, in his first letter to his wife after his arrival at Washington, tells the story:

Georgetown feby 14 tuesday

I came here safe last night, my dearest love, and am safe and well. The road from Baltimore bad but not yet intolerable. My lodgings here are comfortable; I am in the same house with Mr King and Mr Gore, and with other worthies. The ladies of those two Senators are I think more disgusted with Washington and more impatient to return than any homesick lady of my acquaintance who has ever been here. This is no matter of astonishment with me, for though the City of Washington is considerably augmented and improved, and that of Georgetown very much so; the state of Society is so different from our own, and all the associations of ideas which tend to afford comfort and pleasure so utterly precluded by the circumstances and politicks of this atmosphere, that those alone are fitted to enjoy life here, who are disqualified to enjoy it rationally anywhere. — There is at this moment a rumour of peace which throws the natives into a great bustle. But such is the nature of rumour that we believed here, for some time that Madisons house was illuminated though only one mile distant from us, and though there was no foundation for the story. — God grant the intelligence may prove correct. . . .

[P.S.] I would not seal this letter untill I could have an opportunity of ascertaining the truth of the news of peace. Gods holy name be praised. It is the most desireable event which could have occurrd to me, and will enable me, I trust, still to main-

tain the wife of my bosom and the children of my love in a situation which I have struggled hard to support; with many an anxious fear and with hard and laborious exertion. I say again, Gods name be praised.

Thomas H. Perkins, Otis's colleague, wrote a friend at the same time:

> The joyful event of peace has suspended the mission on which I came. . . . Then, thanks to the Giver of all good things! we are once more restored to peace; and I trust I shall never see another war.[8]

If any additional evidence were necessary to refute the conspiracy theory of the Hartford Convention, or Adams's charge that Otis's mission was intended only to provoke another issue between New England and the administration, the effect of the news of peace on Otis and his companions would be conclusive. Had Otis been secretly aiming at secession, or dreaming of the presidency of New England, he would have bemoaned the Peace of Ghent as the worst of all possible evils. On the contrary, he thought it "the most desireable event which could have occurrd." It not only removed the most pressing grievance of his section, but relieved him, personally, of the enormous responsibility that would have fallen upon his shoulders, had the war continued and the administration refused to renounce its Massachusetts revenues.

Had not the Peace of Ghent so opportunely arrested the course of New England sectionalism, the situation would have become critical indeed. Human nature would have impelled Otis and the moderates to stand firm on their demands for defense. They had recommended the state legislatures of New England to call a second convention at Boston in June, 1815, were these demands not

[8] T. G. Cary, *Memoir of T. H. Perkins*, 219.

complied with, and had plainly threatened in that case forcibly to seize upon the federal customs and excises. The conflict with the national authorities that inevitably would have followed such action, conceivably might have thrown New England into the hands of the radical Federalists, and produced a declaration of neutrality during the remainder of the war, or secession, or both. But it is doubtful whether the Boston convention would have been summoned, even had the war continued. The Act of January 27, 1815, removed every grievance connected with the subject of defense, except the manner of paying the state troops. It satisfied the leading New England Federalists in Congress.[9] Even had such men as Otis and Cabot been willing to sanction a further step, simply to press this financial matter, it is highly improbable that public sentiment would have sustained them. Opposition to the ruling class was far stronger in the New England of 1814 than in the South of 1860. New Hampshire and Vermont had not joined the Hartford Convention, and Rhode Island, having done so only by a small majority, had taken no action on the Convention's recommendations. The commercial interest, the economic foundation of New England sectionalism, had obtained no such reverence as the slavery interest afterwards secured in the South.[10] A comparison of the subsequent attitudes of the two sections toward their characteristic anti-national movements, is also significant. The South has never recanted an iota of the principles on which she revolted in 1861; but Massachusetts, as early as 1823,

[9] *N. E. Federalism*, 423; letter of Timothy Pitkin, February 4, 1815, in Treadwell MSS., Conn. Hist. Soc.

[10] The Boston *Yankee*, for instance, attacked the Hartford Convention by sneering at the states represented there. "Poor old Massachusetts," a "potashes and pine board state"; "three barren states whose resources and exports consist only of potashes, mules, and grindstones" — such expressions are common in its pages.

repudiated the Hartford Convention like a converted heretic renouncing the Devil and all his works, and the most severe indictments of it are from the pens of her own citizens.

The immediate effect of the news of peace on New England Federalism was to render Otis's mission bootless, and him and his colleagues ridiculous. The whole country roared with laughter over the sorry plight of the pompous embassy, as described in numerous squibs, cartoons, and bits of doggerel in the Democratic press. One of the best of these satires appeared in the form of an advertisement in Henry Wheaton's paper, the New York *National Advocate:*

Missing.

Three well looking, responsible men, who appeared to be travelling towards Washington, disappeared suddenly from Gadsby's Hotel, in Baltimore, on Monday evening last, and have not since been heard of. They were observed to be very melancholy on hearing the news of peace, and one of them was heard to say, with a great sigh, "Poor Caleb Strong." They took with them their saddle-bags, so that no apprehension is entertained of their having any intention to make away with themselves. Whoever will give any information to the Hartford Convention of the fate of these unfortunate and tristful gentlemen by letter (post paid) will confer a favor upon humanity. The newspapers, particularly the Federal newspapers, are requested to publish this advertisement in a conspicuous place, and send their bills to the Hartford Convention.

P.S. One of the gentlemen was called *Titus Oates*, or some such name.[11]

Besides the ridicule that he had to endure, Otis suffered while at Washington a violent attack of the gout, which confined him to his lodgings. Both ills combined to put him in a most unamiable humor towards the world in

[11] "Hector Benevolus," *The Hartford Convention in an Uproar*, 20.

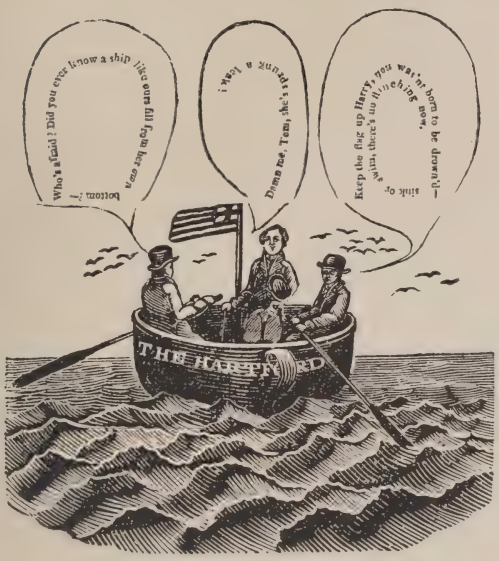
general, and President Madison in particular, a mood which appears in his letters to Mrs. Otis:

23 feby 1815

. . . I presume I have already told you, that we have recd no invitation from Madison. What a mean and contemptible little blackguard. Had we been sent with the declaration of a secession of our State from the Union, an open hearted and magnanimous President, under the exhilarating impressions & softening tendencies of the present moment would have extended to us the Olive branch & assumed a gracious demeanor. But it now suits his purpose to affect great distance & to permit it to be given out that we should not have succeeded in our mission under any circumstances. I believe however we should have succeeded, and yet the little Pigmy shook in his shoes at our approach. From Mr Munroe and Mr Dallas, we have recd every civility. . . .

Georgetown friday 24 feby 1815

. . . The ball *here* on birth night was select and genteel. The party consisted of Gentlemen and ladies. The ball at Washington was of a different Complexion, it was made up chiefly of the Court Party, and strangers allurd by curiosity. After the Company was assembled, upon a flourish of drums and trumpets, the doors open'd seemingly upon sympathetic hinges, and enterd Mrs M—— who I am told Compensates by graciousness and good humour for the want of polished elegance and culture. And who led her in, do you think? No less a personage than *Joe Gales*, editor of the national intelligencer. This fellow has very much the face & manner of a Malay and stared about him I am told with ineffable self complacence and impudence. He acts I suppose as manager, but then she should have gone into the room as a private lady. If she intended to be announced with form and eclat, as the queen of peace, or the woman of first rank in America; some other gentleman usher or lord in waiting should have been selected for the purpose, rather than this dirty editor. What can be more characteristick of the style of the place, of the knowledge of propriety, and of the subservience of dignity and decorum to Party views and services. I am told, all was of a very consistent uniformity. Uncovered


Who's afraid! Did you ever know a ship
bottom?—
Dame Rat. Tom, she's sprung a leak!
sink or swim, there's no use in talking now.
Keep the flag up Harry, now we're born to be drowned!—
THE HARPER

"Three wise men of Gotham
Went to sea in a bowl.—"

A TRIP TO WASHINGTON CITY.

Tune—"JOHNNY BULL BEWARE.

1.
When shall we away,
Says Harry, to the City?
We must not lose a day,
'Twould be a dreadful pity.
Harry, Tommy, Bill
Set out for a frolick,
Said they, we've got a pill,
'Twill give 'em all the cholic.

2.
Better try 'em quick,
They're fairly in the traces;
No matter if they kick
We're ready for their places.
'Tom, Dick and Harry'
Never mind the rabble,
We our point shall carry
In spite of all their gabble.

3.
Speed us on our way,
Better not to tarry,
If we try we may
Drive 'em to old Harry.
Harry, Billy, Tom,
We shall win 'tis sartin,
Let the Demos come
We'll give 'em "Betty Martin."

4.
How shall we contrive
To let the matter out?
They're snugly in their Hive,
'We'll try to ring 'em out!
Tommy, Harry, Bill,
We'll rob them of their honey,
Mind us when you will
We look out for the money.

5.
Let us talk no more
How can we endure it;
Push the Bowl from shore
Then we can ensure it.
Tommy, Harry, Bill,
Never mind the weather,
We've no sails to fill,
Let us stick together.

6.
Jimmy now said they
Let us see your master,
But he told them NAY—
What a sad disaster!
Billy, Harry, Tom,
What the Tophet ails you,
Better now go home
Before your courage fails you.

"A TRIP TO WASHINGTON CITY"

Otis, Perkins, and Sullivan on their "embassy."

benches, naked walls, fiery muslins, and bloody flags, Clerks and Clerkesses, Members of Congress, Officers of the Army with fresh epaulettes that will never now be tarnished. The old gentleman, as Mrs A——y says was not present. He is obliged to wear a muffler round his face. The dry rot which attack'd his jaw has stoped of itself, as it somtimes does on a Crab Apple tree, which bears sour fruit for years after an incipient decay. Tickenor and Frank are here and in my *drawing* room half their time. We have all a great deal of conversation and good humour.

It appears from the commissioners' reports to Governor Strong [12] that they remained in Washington after peace had been announced in order to use their influence towards the payment of the war claims of Massachusetts. At the time of their arrival in Washington a bill to this effect had already been introduced in the Senate, where it was passed; but after news of peace arrived, and it was no longer necessary to humor New England, the bill was killed in the House of Representatives. The mission, nevertheless, had one useful result, in removing a possible cause of conflict between the federal government and Massachusetts. Otis, through his intercession with the Secretary of the Treasury, succeeded in securing the dismissal of suits that were then pending against certain publicans of Old Hampshire, who had resolved to pay no more excise duties, in the hope that the state legislature would sequester all United States taxes.[13] Madison's tactful consent to this act of clemency laid the foundation for the "era of good feelings."

By the time Otis started on his homeward journey, his spirits had improved decidedly, as the following lively account of his gouty departure from Washington indicates:

[12] See end of chap. XXVIII.

[13] See letter from Dallas and reply, in chap. XXVIII.

Baltimore tuesday 28 feby 1815

Here am I my love, safe and sound with whole bones, having accomplished what I consider the worst part of my homeward journey, though I am yet but 43 miles distant from that enchanting city which is nicknamed the Metropolis. Nothing was farther from my mind than the intention of departing on sunday, when I went to bed on saturday evening, but the weather in the morning was fine; our comfortable coach with 4 good horses and a skilfull driver were waiting my nod; I felt free from pain, and quite strong in all my joints, except my two ancles, both feet, all my toes, my left wrist, and the fingers of of my left hand, and a slight affection in both shoulders: — All these were more or less weak & swollen though not painful, but these constituted but a minority, and as there were other joints without them, that were sufficiently strong and flexible, I was inclined to respect the rights of the majority. So said I to P & S — "Suppose I should tell you that I am ready to march in one hour." "Why," says P, "you must judge of your own feelings, and ought not to expose yourself but if you could bear it, it would certainly be a great affair to get on to Baltimore. The thaw is already rapid; The *runs* will be full, the roads frightful and every hour is worth saving." — "Order the carriage Sir I am ready in an hour." — "You are not serious" said Sullivan with a look of incredulity that would have doom'd a Jew to be roasted by the Santa Germanada. "Sir I say I go with you in an hour." Off he flew without waiting to put on a fresh blister. . . . The Bladensburg *run, before we came to the bridge,* was happily in no one place *above* the Horses bellies. — As we passed thro', the driver pointed out to us the spot, right under our wheels, where all the stage horses last year were drowned, but then he consoled us by shewing the tree, on which all the Passengers *but one,* were saved. Whether that one was gouty or not, I did not enquire. The *Chuck* holes, were not *bad,* that is to say they were none of them much deeper than the Hubs of the hinder wheels. They were however exceedingly frequent, but we got thro them all and arriv'd safe at our first stage, Ross's, having gone at a rate rather exceeding two miles & an half per hour. The "man of Ross" gave me a fine warm room and an admirable bed and I awoke on Monday morning still

better. . . . This route is Turnpike throughout, but 40 miles further. It would not answer for me to take the other route, for in case of a *break Down* or other accident, I could not walk far at present, & I should be sorry to stick and freeze in over night (as I have seen happen to twenty waggons) for without an extraordinary thaw I could not be dug out in any reasonable dinnertime the next day.

All along the route to Boston Otis found the people celebrating the return of peace with a fervor that showed their belief that they had won the second war with England. In the main, they were right, for, although not a single object for which the war had been declared was attained; although Canada still remained British, and England retained the right of impressment, Americans had shown that they could fight, and defeat, the veterans of Trafalgar and the Peninsula. This triumph alone was worth all the expense and bloodshed. If there had been a chance of the Hartford Convention securing a hearing for its proposed amendments, that chance was now lost. In their exultation over New Orleans and peace, it was only natural that the American people should regard the Hartford Convention as a despicable attempt to thwart the objects of the war and to break up the Union. Democratic politicians, seeking a foil to their own mismanagement of the war, and a means of discrediting the still formidable Federal party,[14] sedulously fostered this theory, and within a short time it became so deeply rooted as to defy the solemn protests and denials of Otis and his colleagues. Consequently their proposed amendments were rudely rejected by the states.[15] Members of the

[14] In the fall and winter elections to the Fourteenth Congress, sixty-five Federalists were elected — as many as in 1812; and the roster of Representatives from the Eastern States north of the Potomac showed fifty-seven Federalists and only fifty-one Democrats. Niles, IX, 280.

[15] The amendments were adopted only by Massachusetts and Connecticut. Rhode Island and New Hampshire took no action (Niles, VIII, 39, 348). Nine

Hartford Convention were posted annually in Democratic journals, on the 15th of December, as traitors to their country: outside their own section they were punished by "the torment of eternal contempt," as the aged Jefferson wished them to be.[16]

We have traced the course of New England sectionalism from the day when Fisher Ames declared, "the federalists must entrench themselves in the State governments," through embargo, non-intercourse, and war. We have seen the formation of New England grievances, and of the belief that the party of Jefferson and Madison was relentlessly seeking to destroy the economic interests and the social system of New England. We have seen that the Hartford Convention was the logical, traditional method of remedying these grievances; that it was demanded by the people, postponed at first by the leaders, and finally called, in order to afford immediate relief from invasion, to prevent the growing discontent from breaking out into nullification and secession, and to secure guarantees for the future. The motives of Otis and his colleagues were pure, but their methods were surely the worst that could be devised. Blinded by their just hatred of the conflict, they failed to see that its character had changed during 1814; that from a party and sectional war of conquest it had become a struggle for national integrity; that the assembling of a convention of disaffected states, at such a time, was certain to paralyze the national strength. Their

states, including Vermont, passed resolutions of disapproval, some of them most truculent in tone. The legislature of Pennsylvania adopted a report drafted by Nicholas Biddle, containing a conclusive argument against the amendments. H. V. Ames, *Amendments*, 46, 332; Niles, VIII, 99–101, 65–70; *Public Documents containing Proceedings* (Boston, 1815).

[16] *Works* (Ford ed.), IX, 532.

common sense and moderation intervened in time to prevent the Hartford Convention from adopting the Essex junto program; but had these qualities been applied only a few months earlier, the Convention would never have been called. But after all is said on both sides, we must remember that Otis and his colleagues represented the majority in a section, that from 1807 to 1814 was governed with less regard for its feelings and interests, than any section of the United States at any period. They but followed the example of Jefferson and Madison in 1798, with far greater provocation. They endured, with no attempt to resist the laws, wrongs which, though greatly magnified in their eyes, were still far more real, more destructive of their interests, than the supposed wrongs for which eleven states attempted to break up the Union a half-century later. If love of the Union had been no stronger in the New England of that time than in the South of 1860, New England would not have remained in the Union even until 1814, but would have seceded when Jefferson was elected President.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HARTFORD CONVENTION: VII. CORRESPONDENCE AND DOCUMENTS

1814–1815

THE following letters and documents illustrate the subjects treated in the previous six chapters, and include everything hitherto unpublished, that I have been able to find in the Otis Manuscripts and other collections, that throw light on the Hartford Convention.

CHARLES WILLING HARE TO OTIS

Philadelphia Feb. 10, 1814.

* * * * * * * * * * *

The proceedings of your Legislature are received by all here with Anxiety, and by many well meaning and intelligent men of all parties, with concern. So far however as you are yet known to have gone, at the present Session I do for my own part entirely approve them. Were I among your statesmen, I would advise a system of stern unintermitting & animated resistance, upon principles as free from locality as possible. Menaces of dissolving the Union may possibly drive the administration from one or two favorite measures, but they every where deeply sting the National Sentiment, and must be fatal after the danger shall have subsided to the popularity of the Northern interest and the influence of its friends, but I would upon grounds common to the whole people, declare the Embargo Act so far as it makes the departure of the citizen out of the United States dependent on the will of the President, as it authorizes any seizure of person or property without process of law, and as it interdicts trade between different parts of the same State absolutely void, And give a pledge that unless these provisions

of the Act shall within a limited time be repealed, the people shall be protected from its operation. I would assume the law on these points to be so violently and palpably unconstitutional, as to render a reference to the judiciary absurd as it certainly in point of fact will be nugatory & useless, proceeding not so much on a general right of the State Legislature to decide upon the proceedings of the National Government, as upon the inherent right of the people to resist measures fundamentally inconsistent with the principles of just liberty and the Social compact. Having gone far in your opposition, you must go further, to secure to yourselves in future, any respect. As a Pennsylvanian I view the tendencies which now undoubtedly exist to produce a rupture of the Union, with the natural horrour, but it is evident that a vigorous and manly effort on *National ground*, to destroy the causes which produce those tendencies, is the most effectual mode of preventing the evil, & I am persuaded too it would not ultimately be hazardous. The affairs of France, and Secret discontent in the ministerial ranks, render a peace in the course of the Spring or Summer in my opinion certain, and the War excitement being withdrawn there would be no danger of a severe pressure upon you, tho' you should go as far even as Mr. Fessenden has recommended.[1] But if the danger were greater I would meet it. If you have the force it is your solemn duty, whatever may be the hazard to attempt to save this country from the misery and degradation, which the policy of the last ten years has created, & must either in peace or war daily increase. The resolutions proposed in our Legislature relative to raising a force against you, are entitled to nothing but your contempt. They are founded upon a belief that you are insincere and mean nothing more than a common party operation. The sensations of our patriots would be of a very different kind did they believe you in earnest. These opinions however I repeat are not generally adopted here, and as a public avowal of them with a view to our politics would be useless & perhaps pernicious I beg you not to mention them as coming from me. Tell Harry I shall write to him in a few days & remain With great attachment

Your friend & Servt

C. W. Hare

[1] See above, p. 89.

CHARLES WILLING HARE TO OTIS

Philadelphia Oct 1, 1814

My dear Sir,

The threatening aspect of our public affairs, has deterred me from carrying my plans with regard to a voyage to Europe into execution, nor shall I now leave this country, until the storms which threaten us shall have dissipated. I have not yet entirely surrendered the opinion that peace will grow out of the pending negociations, yet the prospect has become so much clouded, as to make it perhaps a duty, to stay until the struggle shall have been terminated.

In the event of a breach of the Negociations and a probable continuance of the War, I am very desirous to possess early information of the course of measures which may be resolved on in New England, since the system to be pursued here must be almost entirely dependent on it, and since the prospect of a change in this State, tho' it may not extensively shew itself, at the ensuing elections, is believed to be more favorable than it has been at any time since the first election of Mr Jefferson.

You will have seen Campbells Reports and the wretched State of the finances. This Report makes it evident beyond all doubt that the war operations of the Government, cannot be long conducted, without the emission of a paper currency, and a heavy taxation on an impoverished people among whom industry ceases to yield the Means of bearing taxation. This taken in connexion with other considerations, which are beginning to obtain influence on the senses as well as the reason, must I think in a few Months produce a strong popular disposition for a much more rapid change of Men & Measures, than can be effected through the medium of the elections. The Manner then in which you will avail yourselves of this disposition, to save our misguided country, becomes a subject of the first importance. By means of resignation [of Madison] it will not I fear be effected without the application of force. A rupture of the Union, is the worst evil which could assail us, except a submission to the present order of things. And the idea of a reversion of authority to the people, by means of committees of safety, tho' it may become necessary to realize it, is dreadful in theory, and may be ruinous in practice. Is there then any course left, but that of call-

ing a convention with power to decide on peace & war, & to make such modifications of our existing political arrangements, as shall reconcile jarring interests, secure the observance of a wise commercial policy, and establish on a sure foundation, the durability of the Union. The boldness of such a step may create objections to it, and the federalists accustomed to dread innovation, may be particularly startled at it, but if peace shall not be immediately concluded, can a less vigorous measure save us from utter destruction? Can the present organisation of the Ministerial party be in any other manner broken up. And while that organisation continues is it not evident, that every effort on our part to produce a change must be fruitless? I am aware that it will be objected that the requisite number of States cannot be induced to accede to such a measure, and I admit it is probable, that if proposed by a single State, it would not be agreed to, but I think that if a meeting of deputies from the New England States should recommend the proceeding, and the recommendation were followed up with vigour by all your Legislatures, the impulse (seconded as it would be by the danger of a separation, and the growing discontent) would prevail in all the States north of the Potomac & in the State of Ohio, if not elsewhere. I perceive no ill which could attend such an effort whether it succeed or fail. If it should succeed, the current which may enable it to do so, would be favourable to a far better organisation of the government than now exists. If it should fail, it will have put you in an attitude not the least engaging to the democrats, and will have opened views to the party in power which will teach them more strongly the danger of persisting in their system than they yet appear to feel. No man of common sense can doubt, that two years longer continuance of the War will ruin our country. Its commerce credit industry and reputation are already gone, and the paper system will revolutionise its property more than confiscation or the axe could do. Tho' in six months you should have with you a majority of the people, you may not in two years have a majority in the two houses of Congress. And possibly within that time new deceptions may produce new errours. There is no doubt Madison will hold his place to the last gasp. You will be unwilling to resort to force or to disunite. What then can you do but appeal to the Sovereign authority of the people, and in what shape

can this be done so free from inconvenience, as in that of a constitutional call for a convention?

I will be much obliged my dear Sir, by your attention to these suggestions, & a full & confidential communication to me of your opinions in regard to them. Should you approve them and think they may be acted on, I will aid the efforts as far as may be in my power, and will at once endeavour to turn the attention of our Newspapers in that direction.

I pray you to present my most respectful compliments to Mrs Otis and your family and to give my most affectionate remembrance to Harry & remain with high respect

Your friend & Servt.

C. W. Hare.

CHARLES WILLING HARE TO OTIS

Philadelphia Oct. 15, 1814

My dear Sir

On my return to the city from which I had been absent for a few days, I had the pleasure of receiving yours of the 6th and 9th, and also read in our papers the report of the committee of your legislature with the resolutions annexed to it. They accord precisely with my ideas. They are American in their tone and language. They are consistent with the constitution. They exhibit no local feeling which can wound the prejudices of the people of the middle and Southern States, and if followed up and *actually carried into execution* on principles in a manner, consistent with the national Sentiment, joint feeling and common interest I am convinced they will, and that they only can, save this country. Every thing is now propitious to the effort. Maryland and Delaware are and it is said & believed that New Jersey will be federal. In this State Snyder is probably reelected but wherever the result of our election is known the change is proved to have been prodigious. This too without any considerable effort on the part of the federalists, and in spite of many of our most influential & powerful men having been neutralized by a belief, that the causes which were in operation favourable to the federal interests had not been sufficiently matured to justify a great exertion, and that their influence & power would be retarded & lessened by an ineffectual display. Among the

Germans particularly I think it not improbable that the sensation which already exists when stimulated by the taxation which has become unavoidable will be too strong for controul. In such a state of things it will be absolutely necessary that the federalists should take some strong & decisive attitude. They must either rally round the government for the purpose of maintaining the national independence, or they must overthrow it in order to do so themselves. Without regard to other objections the present administration cannot sustain the country in a war with England. And with the force which they now possess in all the States north of the Potomac, it is only requisite that the federalists should determine to act efficiently to accomplish all their purposes. In such a course there is no danger of civil war or disunion. It is on the contrary undoubtedly the road to the restoration of peace abroad & its preservation at home & to strengthen & maintain the authority of the Union. Pennsylvania united to the Northern lever it becomes irresistible & the Southern States must submit. The seat of authority is then changed but the national base is enlarged & the Union freed from danger.

Were I to undertake to advise you as to the best mode of carrying the measure into effect I would say, Still keep with regard to our foreign relations on the side of a pacific policy, and give no pledge to continue the war for the barrier, for the lakes or even for the Fisheries. On these points I see no propriety in your committing yourselves, whatever may be your feelings or intentions. In point of policy in a national view it is wrong to do so, and I think that when the first warmth produced by our late dispatches shall have been exhausted, the continuance of the war on these grounds will be less popular than on those on which it was commenced, but I would make every demonstration of an ardent love for a high minded independence and of a determination to carry on the war for defensive purposes, with all the nerve and exertion of which you are capable. I would do nothing from which it might be most remotely inferred that you are disposed to justify the enemy, to extenuate unjust pretensions, or even to mitigate our hostile feeling towards him. All this for any of your virtuous views is unnecessary *at this time*, & will wound a generous feeling. In reference to the call for a convention I would avow that it was re-

sorted to as a necessary means of removing the administration by a proceeding more rapid than the ordinary process of the elections, but I would cautiously guard against stating it as a means of establishing your preponderance or even securing any particular attention to your interests. I would mention a few obvious points as requiring reform, but would abstain from every suggestion that a radical alteration was intended. I think this has been one of our greatest mistakes. We have combatted too many errours at the same time and have thereby roused too great a mass of prejudice to be resisted. The propriety of a periodical revision of the practical construction of the constitution, the numerous important doubts which will exist in relation to particular points & doctrines, which may be settled by a convention, the local and geographical jealousies which might be allayed, the dreadful organisation of party which it would break up, and its being the means of creating a new attitude which would soften the dishonour of a bad peace are auxiliary topics adequate to the object. At all events having now attacked the constitution, you will rather storm it than raise the siege. Your friends here cannot rally round your standard until you shew that you mean to sustain it. When reduced to the Alternative we shall choose it, but the least symptom of indecision or wavering on your part may be fatal. I had almost made up my mind to go into the Army, which it is not impossible I may yet do, but if I see that this measure is heartily adopted & likely to be vigorously pursued I will devote my days & nights almost exclusively to its support. I need not observe that I wish you to consider my letters as confidential. My affectionate regards to Harry & Mrs. Otis & believe me dear Sir very faithfully your friend & Servant

H.

OTIS TO ROBERT GOODLOE HARPER

From the Harper Manuscripts

Boston October 27 1814

My dear Sir,

The reverend Mr. Edward Everet the bearer of this letter intending a journey to Washington, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of introducing him to your acquaintance. He is con-

sidered here as the first young man of his age (only 21) which this State had produced, and his literary and classical attainments, his eloquence, piety, good temper and good manners would render him the ornament of any country. These circumstances give him a title to the acquaintance of such men as yourself & to the information and improvement which naturally result from it.

We have an eye on you here; and our ear is open to all you are reputed to say and do. Your old friends are concerned at the manner in which Bayard has announced the rupture of the negotiation in a letter to you. It is not the language of a cool diplomatist. If the terms were inadmissable they should be rejected but you remember our grammar rule of forma et modus rei &c. We shall have no objection here to better terms. But I religiously believe, that 90 out of every 100 men in this State would if left to themselves prefer *treating* on the proposed basis *at least*, to the continuance of the war one day. I think the worst loan we can make to Government is federal zeal, they use it for worse purposes than money, to which it serves as a substitute. I am dr sir yr friend & respectful

H. G. Otis.

JOHN TAYLOR GILMAN [2] TO OTIS

Exeter Octr. 31st, 1814.

Sir

Your letter of 20th Instt. was duly received. I had previously received, by Mr. Knapp, a letter from his Excellency Governor Strong — another signed by the President of the Senate & Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Resolutions respecting a Convention at Hartford &c. I had considerable conversation with Mr. Knapp, and, previous to the passing of the Resolutions, with Mr. Perkins, and endeavored fully to convey to them my Opinion, and the present existing circumstances of this State. In addition to all other considerations, respect for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts & its excellent Governor excite ardent desire to meet their wishes — under similar circumstances I should deem it perfectly safe to follow Governor Strong, for in esteem & respect for him I may have

[2] The Governor of New Hampshire.

thousands of equals but acknowledge no superior. — I have conversed with the best men here & at Portsmouth upon the Subject of my calling the Legislature, and have not found one in favor of it — many fear the consequences of a call *for the Especial purpose* even if a Majority of the Council would consent to it. I have delayed my answer to your letter not knowing but some other circumstances might make a call of the Legislature necessary, If any thing should occur within Ten or Twelve days from this date I could convene the Council and the Legislature in time to accomplish the object.

My best wishes attend you, and be Assured If I can see a fair Opportunity for giving the Aid of New Hampshire every exertion in my power will be made for that purpose.

Very respectfully I am Your Humb. Servt

J. T. Gilman

GOUVERNEUR MORRIS TO OTIS

Morrisania 8 Novr 1814

Dr Sir

Your friend Mr. Everet, delivering your Letter of the 27th, had the goodness to partake of our Family Dinner. I was pleased with his Visit and hope he will, as he promised, repeat it.

I have looked with anxious Interest at the Proceedings of your State and, surprised at the Apathy of others, felt, as an American of some little Self Respect when I perceived a Glimmering from the Lamp of public Spirit in Massachusetts. How bright in 1775! I am much flattered by your Politeness, but it is not for me to say what shall be done by your Convention. Doubtless your Plan was well digested before the Measure was proposed, and such is my Confidence in your Delegation that I have little Doubt of assenting to what they may recommend.

I supposed it was in the Contemplation of your Legislature to meet, by a wise and just Course, the perilous Condition in which the Northern and Eastern States are placed by the national Government. I supposed you would say to them "deprived, by your Neglect, of that Protection which it was your Duty to grant, and ordered to defend ourselves, we will do it as well as we can; employing for that Purpose all our Strength and Resources." I supposed also that to such as should charge you

with meditating a Breach of the Union you would calmly reply, "the Union is already broken by the Administration. Should we, therefore, now rely on it we should forfeit all Claim to Common Sense."

I readily concieve that, depending for Power on public Opinion, you fear to exceed the vague undefined Authority which it confers. But we know, from Experience, that public Confidence adheres to those who adopt bold Measures; for when the General trembles the Soldier must quake. But you will perhaps say, "we have to combat corrupt Influence," and what is easier than to conquer a Foe whom a Word will disarm? The Influence you fear arises from the Power of conferring lucrative Offices, but the Moment you say Money shall no longer flow in the same Channel you break the Sorcerer's Rod and the Witches, you may rely on it, will not dance round an empty Cauldron.

The last Dupery has not, indeed, ceased as yet to operate. The Notion of some Federalists, God forgive them, that this War had become defensive, was puffed off in the Hope, perhaps, of conciliating irreconcileable Foes; but, if so, a more idle Project never existed. The Majority are ready for Union provided that, supporting their Plans, you leave them in Possession of Power. On these Conditions they will not only unite with you but laugh at you and despise you in the Bargain. As to that fond Notion about the War, which could never stand the Test of Reason, it must vanish with Mr Munroe's late Declaration that their Object is to conquer Canada.

The proposed Conscription too seems intended by Providence to open the Eyes of your People and rouse their Indignation. Fortunately, this Embrio Despotism must be still born from a Want of fiscal Ressource. The Paper Palace of our Rulers, who are but Children in the Science of Finance, would perish, from the Frailty of it's Materials, if it did not fall, from the Want of Foundation. Thus, while they invite and stimulate you to act, they shew their Incompetence to obstruct your Course.

You ask if New York will join you. To which I reply that if your Measures be feeble, she certainly will not; because intelligent Federalists can have no motive and Democrats will not quit their Ranks before they see a respectable Force. But if your Measures be strong, I believe New York will join you,

because the Federalists may, according to Custom deliberate and hesitate and split Hairs about Right and Wrong, the Democrats, whose religious Principle it is to worship the rising Sun, will not be wanting to you when you are no longer wanting to yourselves. New York therefore, a coy but willing Damsel, may, for the Form and Fashion's Sake, require what the french call une douce Violence but her Embrace will not be the less ardent.

I am my Dear Sir respectfully your obedt. Servt.

Gouv Morris

OTIS TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

From the Morris Manuscripts, through the courtesy of Mrs. Alfred Maudsley.[3]

Boston Dec. 10 1814

My dear Sir

* * * * * * * * * * *

I go for Phillipi this day. You must not think us wholly destitute of plan and concerted measures in Consequence of my asking your advice. But no project could be formed which would be independent of events or of the opinions of our political friends in other States. I hope we shall meet with a spirit of energy and decision, which the times demand; but you who know human nature and the nature of our institutions which is much too human, can judge whether it will be an abortion or not, as well as I can.

With great consideration I am Yrs most obediently

H. G. Otis.

THE REVEREND JOSEPH LYMAN TO JOHN TREADWELL[4]

From the Treadwell Manuscripts in the Connecticut Historical Society.

Hatfield Dec'r 14 1814

My Dear Sir

I consider the appointment of the Convention to meet at Hartford a most favourable dispensation of Providence. I am

[3] This is the only letter of this period from Otis to Morris that has been preserved. The omitted portion introduces the bearer, George Ticknor.

[4] The writer was the minister at Hatfield, and a relative of several Federalist leaders of the same family name.

not a little gratified to see your name enrolled among the worthies designated to represent the State of Connecticut in that Body. Let me congratulate you and our country upon the fair prospect, that, by the blessing of heaven, something may be done in that assembly which will lay a firm foundation for the restoration of those privileges which have been wrested from the people of the Northern States and indeed from the Nation. — May the light of Divine wisdom be imparted to you and to those good men who may act with you in the good work of saving our country. I trust that *that* Assembly will put their dependence on the guidance of the Supreme Ruler and will in a formal manner daily ask counsel of God. And it is to be hoped that prayers will be continually ascending up to heaven from the lips and hearts of good people, that God will have the Convention in his holy keeping and that he will guide their deliberations to a result happy for their constituents, such as will recover our country from those wrongs and sufferings under which it has been so long and deeply afflicted. After a series of insults and outrages on the one part and on the other a long course of unparalelled patience and forbearance which our enemies have ridiculed as timidity and cowardice the people have awoke from their slumbers to a vindication of their rights which have been so wantonly infringed. — It is in consonance with the public feeling & sentiment, that the Convention hath been appointed; and the eyes of the people are turned upon them, & from them, under God, they expect relief from their burdens, for a termination of the present nefarious war and for some sure pledges, that a recurrence in future shall not be had to those oppressive measures which have wasted their property, subverted their liberty & threatened to make their bondage as permanent as it is ignominious. The people feel their wrongs and are filled with confidence in the Convention that they will devise measures effectually to relieve them. How propitious it is, that they are not so chaffed with their vexations and sufferings as to enter on measures of deliverance disorderly and violent; that they have chosen a course dictated by prudence and which may lead them in a strait path to redress and safety —

We have put our hand to the plough, we cannot look back only to meet the scorn of our oppressors, to provoke from them new aggressions and to sink our character in our own esteem

and in the view of all others. We will then hope that the Convention, with that prudence and discernment which attach to the characters of the members, will take measures explicit and decided to redress our wrongs and lead us in safe paths. Let a fellow citizen embarked in the same cause state to his long tried friend his sentiments and feelings upon a subject of such solemn interest to the whole community.

May it not be expedient and useful, that a full and lucid Statement be made by the Convention of the wrongs which we have suffered from the arrogant encroachments of our national Rulers by unnecessary and unconstitutional restrictions upon our commerce and the customary occupations of life and those with an obvious view to exhaust our means, sink our spirits and impair our strength both as individuals and sovereign States; to bring us into an abject, servile dependence on their will? Have not they wholly failed of that reciprocity of sacrifices which one portion of the Union made to their Coestates when the compact was formed. Indeed the main object of our oppressors has been to make themselves powerful at the expence of the New England States. No frauds and deceptions have been neglected by which they might establish themselves on our humiliation and ruin. While in power they have uniformly bestowed their offices either upon their own citizens or upon the most profligate characters in our section of the Country, upon men prepared to barter away the character and honour of their native states to the ambition of Tyrants and to replenish their own hungry coffers. The growth of favouritism and court influence has been enormous beyond a paralel. And now we are left unless some efficacious remedy be applied to nothing better than to see our unprincipled neighbours fattening on our spoils and directing their energies to fasten the chains of vassalage upon their brethren and fellow citizens. The progress of the administration since 1801 has been one uniform course of demoralization, of proscription and favouritism — And thus it must be, so long as Slaves are to place our Rulers in the chair of state. The Constitution has been outraged and its sacred provisions trampled under foot. And is it not indispensible that provisions be made to prevent the repetition of measures so degrading to our honour and ruinous to our property and safety. Pass'd amendments, so called, of the Constitution have been made with a

view to impair our privileges. Is it not time that such actual amendments be now made as will restore and secure to us and every portion of the Nation an equal enjoyment of civil benefits and privileges? Slave representation must be abolished or we shall be forever degraded and oppressed. And the power of an unlimitted extension of the national rights to foreign regions must be forever foreclosed — Our State Sovereignties must be guarded against encroachments — The power of making offensive wars be taken from the hands of [men] who have so madly involved us in all the guilt and infamy of the present destructive, hopeless war, a war without provocation, without object unless to secure a wicked faction in power & prepare the country for a military despotism. Provision must be made that equal and prompt protection be afforded to every part of the nation. Until that is done, should we not retain our means and resources in our own hands and effectually bar our oppressors from the power of drawing from us our men and our money. Self preservation forbids that we minister to this ruinous war made more upon us than upon Great Britain. To feed this war is highly criminal; it is self murder. To me it seems that the time is now come when something decisive be done for our relief and preservation. Should the present auspicious season pass we shall be justly scouted by our adversaries, the people will sink in despondence or which is more probable but scarcely less dangerous will take the work of redressing their wrongs into their own hands & run into excesses which we know not how or when they will end. Should the Convention, as I believe they will, take prudent, firm, and decisive measures, the right forward course, the issue I doubt not will be highly salutary. But timid counsels, halfway measures will plunge the country into confusion or despair. An opposite course will soon teach our oppressors to respect our rights. They dare not encounter firm just and wise decisions. If they should attempt it they will at once annihilate their present ill gotten power and influence

We may anticipate the subtle intrigues of interested and designing politicians to divide the counsels and to paralize and render nugatory the exertions of the Convention. From such intrigues they will derive their most confident hopes. They will resound the awful dangers of dissolving the Union of the States. But the only fair prospect of preserving the Union and making

it worth preserving will under heaven depend upon the firm dispassionate and energetic decisions of the Convention. Fearless and upright measures can alone preserve the Connection of the States. Let those who would dissolve the Union because we maintain our just rights see to the consequences A Union preserved by timidity and submission would be the greatest infamy and curse of a political kind which could be inflicted upon us. A Union founded on submission is the Union of slaves. Let those who prize it enjoy it if they please. But the Sons of those who vindicated their rights against the encroachments of Great britain, encroachments far less oppressive than those we have felt from the Rulers at Washington will I trust never cling to a Union upon such sorry and base terms.

A right onward course marked by prudence, moderation, rectitude and a love of liberty will bring back us and our country to a state of security and dignity. It lies with the Convention as Gods Instrument to save our country in this hour of her greatest distress and peril. My Dear Friend much do the people expect from your deliberations and deep will be their mortification if nothing efficacious be done — Under God my hopes for future blessings to my country rely on [your] exertions and those of your associates. I look into futurity with anticipation of the blessings which posterity will pronounce upon the memories of the New England Patriots who met at Hartford and wisely commenced the work of our nations deliverance. May heaven assist and bless you and make you worthy of the name of the Political Saviours of New England and the United States — The present rumours of peace have nothing more or less to do with the business of the convention. War or Peace are alike a judgement upon us until we can break the ignominious fetters with which we have suffered ourselves so long to be bound — Pray accept kindly the ebullitions of an heart which is so uniformly attached to you in the bonds of confidence and friendship — And if you can save a few minutes from your arduous labours pray let me hear how matters progress and what is the prospect before us — I am with sentiments of unfeigned esteem most cordially your friend

and humble servant

JOSEPH LYMAN

OTIS TO MRS. OTIS

Hartford Saturday Decr 18 [5] [1814]

My dearest friend,

I am now in the *bottom* of a tremendous Hall, call'd a Council Chamber — sixty feet square, and two stories high, in which though our labours may be gigantic we look like pigmies. I write you merely to keep my hand in, and to shew yt you are always in my heart, but I am permitted to say nothing upon subjects agitated within doors and as we sit all day: Connecticut fashion, I know nothing which transpires without. It is not possible to form any conjecture of the duration of our Session here. I presume not less than a fortnight yet to come, I know not how much longer. . . .

STEPHEN LONGFELLOW, JR., TO MRS. LONGFELLOW

From the Longfellow Manuscripts

Hartford, Decr. 22, 1814

* * * * * * * * * * *

We have a convention of very intelligent, wise & respectable men, who appear to possess great firmness & moderation, & are actuated by the single view of promoting the best interests of the Country. We are progressing very pleasantly, & with great unanimity; & shall, I am confident, arrive at a result which *ought* to satisfy every reasonable man & true friend of his country.

The gentlemen of Hartford have done the convention the honor to invite them to a public Entertainment but so solemn & interesting is the business which claims our attention & this business presses upon us so urgently that we shall decline the invitation. We are constantly engaged through the day, & in the evenings we discuss points at our lodgings.[6] . . .

[5] Otis's error for December 17.

[6] The Hartford *American Mercury* commented on the seclusion of the members as follows (December 27) "The Boston members are never seen at our Hotels but live very much retired. When in the Streets they have a melancholy and dejected appearance. They never look up, unless when passing under a tree, or a sign post . . . or some other thing from which something is or *may be suspended*."

OTIS TO MRS. OTIS

Thursday 22d [December, 1814]

My dear Soul, I have been *here* a week, & from home nine days, and not a line from your dear hand. It was not so in days of yore, and I hope I shall no longer be under this privation. It is very dull work in which we are employed, I have been in no one house but our lodgings, except the Lieut Governor's and I shall this day dine with Wadsworth, as an excepted case. But as a general rule we decline all invitations. As usual in my own State, a full share of work will fall upon my Shoulders here, but this I am easy about. We sit *twice* a day Connecticut fashion, and in the evenings talk politicks over the fire, and hear Bigelow tell stories, though the old Stock is nearly exhausted. I cannot yet see beyond the *Horizon* of this place but shall keep hoping that Saturday week, will enable us to come to a conclusion. We have great unanimity, but still a great deal of discussion. All is secret. We shall probably gratify nobody at first, but believing as I do that we shall do the very best *practicable* thing, we shall do good, and ensure final approbation from the wise and good and from our own Consciences. . . .

Friday 23 Decr 1814

My dearest Love, Though the pleasure of communing with you by word or writing is essential to the enjoyment of all other pleasures and the alleviation of all cares, yet have I postponed it several days beyond my intention. It was my wish to give you a narrative of little events and to indulge in a scope to my own feelings. But of all the hard work I have ever done, I have had no stint equal to what has employed me the last six days. I have been kept writing eight or ten hours some days. This labour is over, and will probably one day be tho't not worth the trouble it has cost. Still I am so engaged that I can do little more than send you my invocation for the choicest blessings of Almighty God upon your loved self and the pledges of our long and mutual affection, at the opening of a new year. . . .

STEPHEN LONGFELLOW, JR., TO MRS. LONGFELLOW

From the Longfellow Manuscripts

Hartford, Decr. 26, 1814

We have settled the great points on which our report is to be founded, and a committee is now preparing the result of our deliberation. It will require some time to put it into such a form as it ought to assume. I hope we shall be able to finish our business by next Saturday, but it is uncertain.

On Saturday afternoon Mr. Bigelow Mr. Wilde Mr. Waldo & I took a carriage & went down to the city of Middletown, which lies on the River about fifteen miles below Hartford.

We had the pleasure of meeting there the veneral Judge Trumbul the author of McFingal, and the brave Mc. Donnough the hero of Champlain. Judge Trumbul is far advanced in life, but his face beams with intelligence, and even at this age his eyes flash with all the fire of genius & his mind still retains the vivid imagination of the past. Mc. Donnough is if possible more modest than he was before his late brilliant victory. He has just returned to his family to enjoy that happiness in the bosom of his friends which is the just reward of such distinguished bravery, & appears much more congenial to his feelings than the pomp & splendor of public honors & distinction, which the people are everywhere desirous to bestow upon him. The inhabitants of Middletown have lately given him a splendid Ball. . . .

LEWIS BURR STURGES [7] TO ROGER MINOTT SHERMAN

From the Sherman Manuscripts, in the Bridgeport Scientific Society

Washington January 1st 1815.

My dear Sir

I sincerely wish you a happy new year & many to come, and may our beloved Country experience the best of Heaven's blessings in future according to their past days of afflictions.

I presume you are now at Hartford deliberating with your worthy and respectable Associates upon the important subjects

[7] Sturges was a fellow-townsman of Sherman, and a member of Congress from 1805 to 1817.

confided to you. What you will do is a subject of much speculation here & elsewhere. As I have before said I fully confide in your prudence & wisdom & also your decision. I have no doubt of the good effects of the Convention upon the great interests of the Country — especially of New England. I am certain that the administration & their adherents fear & respect you. I think you will not gratify them in their wishes, for what I mean I refer you to my last Letter. I have lately had a conversation with Mr. Stockton of New Jersey than for whom there is not a man living I have a more perfect confidence, as to his correct view of all important subjects, his prudence & his genuine Federalism. he thinks nothing wou'd give our political adversaries greater advantages than a direct proposition for a dissolution of the States, or an absolute refusal to pay the taxes which wou'd amount to a severance from the Government. he believes for instance that in New Jersey, the Federalists cou'd not at all sustain themselves without pointedly reprobating any such propositions. If you should think under the circumstances any bold propositions expedient, I submit whether they ought not to be conditional.

I see no harm in proposing conventions in the States to take into consideration the expediency of altering certain obnoxious articles of the Constitution, say the representation acquired by the southern blacks (upon this subject many of the southern men since the imposition of the Land tax profess to be willing to expunge it), the power of Congress to lay a perpetual Embargo — to declare War without a vote of two thirds &c &c.

You will pardon me the freedom I have used. this letter is from a Friend to a Friend. I confess I am adverse to any measure, which our adversaries may have the address to make the people believe is rash. If you find our people can endure their oppressions a little longer I would prefer petitions, for I really believe our prospects will ere long brighten unless, which to be sure is to be feared, we are soon involved in one common ruin. If the Government can sustain itself, I fully believe the next President will be a Federalist. it is impossible the present men can preserve their [power] whether we have war or peace.

I am respectfully & sincerely your Friend

Lewis B Sturges

HARTFORD CONVENTION SCHEDULES[9]

Schedule H, — Shewing the State of Slaves, as they respect taxes and votes in the United States.

1. the Slave holding States had on the census of 1790 — 13 votes on account of their Slaves in the House of Representatives in Congress, and in the election of president and vice president — on the census of 1800 — 15 such votes; and on the census of 1810 they have 17 such votes, to wit, Maryland two, Virginia seven North Carolina 2 South Carolina three, Georgia two and Kentocky one.

2. these Slave holding States, in a Direct tax of 6 millions, pay, on account of their Slaves 560,000 dollars, omitting fractions. If Slave representation be relinquished, and with it Slave taxation, (as one was mainly the consideration of the other), this $560,000 must be apportioned according to representation, founded on free population, that is, omitting fractions, among 165 representatives, given by the free population, then each State will be assessed, for each of the 165 representatives, it may have $3,390 in such 6 million tax, more without, than with Slave representation. Vermont, for instance, has 6 representatives; in such a tax Vermont will pay, retaining Slave representation, $196,687.42 or thereabouts — but, relinquishing Slave representation, Vermont will pay, in such a tax, about $20,300 more to or in all $216,987. If this tax be established for several years, as it probably will be, it makes so much difference each year a State pays in such a tax for a representative elected by reason of Slaves, $32,973 nearly.

3. the practical operation of Slave votes in Important cases, in which these votes have carried the measure or not —

In the election of president in 1800 Mr. Adams had 65 votes, Mr. Jefferson 73 — 13 of them being Slave votes, but for them Mr. Adams had been elected.

In amending the Constitution, in relation to Vice president, Slave votes carried the Measure.

On several important occasions the slave votes have reduced the majority to 2 or 3 tho: they have not decided the question;

[9] In the handwriting of Nathan Dane. Evidently drawn up for the Committee of Seven on the Report, but not adopted. Cf. note 2, chap. xxvi.

as in the case of the British treaty of 1794 — the election of president in 1796, &c —
and tho. the restrictive System & war would have been voted if there had been no Slave votes — and so some other interesting measures were adopted without them, yet the presidency being obtained by Mr. Jefferson by means of them, it follows that most great measures for fourteen years past have been, directly or indirectly, affected by them, & often in a very material manner; and in a long period, too, in which the equivalent intended for these Slave votes has been, in no adequate degree, yielded — as only 5 millions in direct taxes have been assessed since the Constitution was adopted — the future equivalent, however, may be different.

Schedule J. briefly Shewing the effects on the federal balance of power, in the admission of new States into the Union.

1 when the revolution was affected and the Constitution adopted by the thirteen States, they were all on the Atlantic Sea board, and, as such, had a common interest. the most Material, and, almost, only differences were 1st. in regard to Shipping and the carrying trade: Tho all had an interest in these, yet all East of the Potomac (except perhaps New Jersey) had much the greatest interests — and on this point they had a majority, of four (viewing New Jersey as neutral)

2 in regard to negro Slavery — tho. all the States but one (and that till the revolution) admitted the *principle* of negro Slavery, yet five States, Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, had so great an interest in it, as very, properly to be considered Slave holding States, and the other 8 not as Slave holding States — again, on this point, the latter had a majority of *three;* and then, that the deep interest the minority had in this Slavery, might not be sacrificed by a majority, a provision was made in the Constitution to protect it, for a limited time.

2. In the course of 20 years, of great prosperity, an immense Surplus capital was accumulated, in all parts of the United States — this in the commercial States, was, naturally vested in commerce, as Shipping, merchandise, &c and in the Slave holding States, generally, in Western lands; hence many influential men in them, some in the middle & a few in the Eastern

States, became deeply interested in settling those lands; and of course, in drawing to them settlers from the Atlantic, &, especially, the Eastern population. Thus grew up a new and a very important union of interest, more especially between the Slave holding States and the Western country — but this did not affect the old balance of the Union, till 3 Western interior States, Kentucky, Ohio & Tennessee — were raised up by this interest, & admitted into the Union — then the balance was, materially, affected — for reckoning Vermont neutral as to commerce, the number of commercial States was not increased; hence their Senators remained, as when the Constitution was adopted, 16 in number; whereas after the admission, the 3 new interior & non commercial States, added to the 5 Slave holding States (which, as to the carrying trade & shipping, are also non-commercial) made a number equal to that of the commercial States. Then these non commercial States pressed the admission of Louisiana not interested much in shipping into the Union which acts with them, tho. on the Sea board and tho. deeply interested in exportations and importations — on the whole the balance is already against the commercial States, which was so much in their favour, when the Constitution was adopted.

3. It clearly follows that if a bare majority in Congress can admit new States into the union, (all interior ones as they must be) at pleasure, in these immense Western regions, the balance of the union, as once fairly contemplated, must soon be destroyed.

MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSIONERS TO GOVERNOR STRONG

From the Massachusetts Archives [10]

Washington February 16th 1815.

His Excellency Caleb Strong Esq

Sir,

We arrived in this place on the evening of the 13th and were closely followed by the rumour of peace, which, together with the absence of the Gentlemen from Connecticut,[11] induced

[10] House Files, 8001. The letter is in Sullivan's handwriting.

[11] Nathaniel Terry and Calvin Goddard, the Connecticut commissioners appointed for the same object.

us to suspend our application to the Government upon the immediate business of our mission, untill these gentlemen should arrive, or untill the certainty of peace should render the most important subject entrusted to our agency, unnecessary to be discussed. As the news of this auspicious event is now abundantly confirmed, we consider that the occasion for negotiation, or conference, with the Government upon the subject of providing for the defence of the State has ceased, and that our commission, in that particular, has terminated ipso facto. — We have, however, called upon the Secretaries of the Treasury and of War, and have been introduced to the President; and by all of them have been received with great courtesy. We propose to remain here for a few days for the purpose of obtaining, if possible, an allowance for the expense incurred by Massachusetts, in her preparations for defence the last year.

We have the honor to be, with great respect,

Your Excellency's obedient servants,

H G Otis
T H Perkins
Wm. Sullivan

ALEXANDER J. DALLAS TO OTIS

Treasury Department
18th Feby. 1815.

Sir,

I have submitted to the consideration of the President, your letter of the 15th instant, requesting that orders might be given, to discontinue the suits for penalties, which had been incurred by a number of persons, who at a meeting in the County of Hampshire, and State of Massachusetts, "had agreed to withhold the payment of their Taxes, until the Session of the Legislature of that State, under a mistaken belief, that the State could, and would, interpose for their relief." the President under impressions which the Treaty of peace was calculated to produce; has expressed himself in favor of complying with the application; and the proper steps will be taken, to communicate to the District Attorney, his determination upon the subject.

I am, very respectfully, Sir Your most Obedt. Servt.

A. J. Dallas.

OTIS TO ALEXANDER J. DALLAS

Georgetown Feby 21 1815

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 18th informing me of the assent of the President of the U. S. to my request in behalf of the persons lately convend in Massachusetts, for the purpose of agreeing to suspend the payment of their taxes. I have lost no time in taking measures to apprise those persons of the prompt condescension manifested by the President in the accordance of this favour, and have no doubt it will produce the impressions which ought to be expected from acts of bounty upon grateful & generous minds. I pray you Sir to tender to the President my respectful thanks, for permitting this favor to be granted through my instrumentality, and to be assured of my due estimation of the prompt polite and gracious manner, in which you have promoted my application.

I return a card from Mr. Munroe to yourself, for detaining which I owe you an apology; I have been confind ever since I last saw you, by a sudden and severe fit of gout.

I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir yr most obedt ser

H G Otis

MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSIONERS TO GOVERNOR STRONG

From the Massachusetts Archives [12]

May 13, 1815.

Report of Commissioners to his Excellency the Governor.

The Undersigned, appointed by his Excellency the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Council, Commissioners, to proceed to the seat of the National Government for the purposes expressed in a resolve of the Legislature of the twenty seventh day of January now last past, beg leave respectfully to report —

[12] Senate Files, 5032.7. It is in Otis's handwriting. Printed in a rare official document, *Public Documents containing Proceedings of the Hartford Convention*, Boston, 1815.

That in virtue of the said resolve, and of the instructions given under it by his Excellency, they proceeded to the seat of the national Government in the most expeditious manner for the purpose of attempting to accomplish the objects of their mission. — On the day of their arrival at Washington, a report of the conclusion of a treaty of peace between the United States and Great Britain was extensively propagated and credited, and on the next day, the news assumed a shape of probability, which in the opinion of the undersigned and of the senators and delegates from this Commonwealth in Congress, with whom they were instructed to consult, rendered it proper to suspend any application to the Government of the United States, and wait for a confirmation of this welcome intelligence. — The certainty of this event being soon placed beyond all possible doubt, by the actual arrival of a Messenger with the treaty at Washington, justified a still further delay; and the final ratification of the treaty by Government, having most happily superseded the necessity of any such arrangements, for the defence of this Commonwealth, as were proposed in the said resolve, it was judged proper by the Undersigned, to abstain altogether from requesting an audience in their public capacity, or exhibiting their credentials to any persons. —

The Undersigned conceiving that an effort to obtain a repayment of monies advanced by the Commonwealth for the national defence, was within the scope of their commission and instructions, had intended to have brought that subject into full view in a conference with the Heads of the proper Departments; — But at this moment, a bill, whose provisions fully embraced this object, had passed the Senate, unanimously, or nearly so, and it was believed that the views of this Commonwealth would be more effectually promoted by endeavours to facilitate the passing of that bill through the House, than by soliciting the Executive Government, which might justly have hesitated to act upon a subject, which Congress thus appeared to consider as belonging to their province. — The Undersigned therefore remained at the seat of Government no longer than was necessary to communicate to their friends in Congress such information as they possessed in relation to the Claims of the Commonwealth, conceiving that this concern could not possibly be left in better hands than their Members of Congress,

from whom they experienced the most cordial and zealous assistance. — The bill however did not pass the House of Representatives.

All which is submitted. —

H. G. Otis,
T. H. Perkins,
W. Sullivan.

Boston, May 13, 1815.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE ERA OF GOOD FEELINGS

1815–1822, ÆT. 50–56.

THE world peace of 1815 brings us to the end of the colonial epoch in America; to the beginning of a new era of nationalism. The Peace of Paris meant that the strife of Guelphs and Ghibellines in America, pitiful shadow of the great European drama, would cease; the Peace of Ghent, leaving American territory intact and the laurels of recent military and naval victories unsmirched, meant that America had won the war with Great Britain, entered into so rashly yet so wisely. "In a single day, almost in a single instant," as Henry Adams has said, "the public turned from interests and passions that had supplied its thought for a generation, and took up a class of ideas that had been unknown or but vaguely defined before." [1] Henceforth we hear no more in American politics of Monarchists and Jacobins, of Orders in Council and Decrees of the Empire, of British insolence and French duplicity. The nation abruptly turned its back on Europe, and set its face westward. New problems of the frontier, of transportation, of free trade and protection, exclusively occupied its attention for the next fifteen or twenty years, and the black cloud of the slavery question presently showed itself above the horizon.

How were the people of New England, and their governing class, to adapt themselves to these changed conditions? No section of the country rejoiced with so full a

[1] *United States*, IX, 80.

heart over the Peace of Ghent, but no section, with the possible exception of tide-water Virginia, was left in so pitiful a condition economically and politically. Massachusetts seemed to have entered upon a permanent decline. Her petty agriculture could not rival that of the growing West, and her wide commercial interests had suffered grievously from the system of Jefferson and Madison. Although saved from a complete overthrow of her commerce by the temporary expedients of smuggling and privateering, she was now face to face with the competition of the British merchant marine. Non-intercourse had diverted much of her capital from commerce to manufactures, infant industries which prospered while those conditions lasted, but which one after another faced bankruptcy when peace brought in a flood of British goods. The best elements of her working class, in despair, were migrating westward, until her population in the second decade of the nineteenth century barely increased. Politically, her position was equally unfortunate. Whether rightly or wrongly, Massachusetts was regarded by most Americans as a wayward sister that had deserted the American cause at its hour of greatest need. It remained to be seen whether her ship of state could pull out from under the lee of misfortune, and forge ahead with the rest of the fleet under the favoring breezes that blew now from the West, instead of from Europe.

The life of Harrison Gray Otis, closely interwoven as it was with that of his state and party, also enters upon a new epoch with the Peace of Ghent. In 1815 the Federal party split into three divisions. The younger and more ambitious members made haste to abjure the Hartford Convention, and to scramble aboard the Republican "band-wagon." Many valiant knights of the Essex persuasion, had no thought of giving up the fight against

Jacobinism and wished to continue in undying opposition to every act of the national administration.[2] Otis led the bulk of the party in a far wiser course. He perceived, within the first year of peace, that the Republican party, having absorbed every Federalist principle of permanent value, did not intend to use its power to the detriment of New England's sectional interests, and that under these circumstances there could be no object in withholding Federalist support from Madison and Monroe.[3] His policy was publicly announced in a letter to his constituents that appeared in the *Columbian Centinel* of December 26, 1818, on the subject of the Massachusetts war claims:

> As at present "all's well," — and the measures of government are favorable not less to the interests of your part of the Union than to the rest; as a due disposition has been manifested to provide for the great interests of navigation, the fisheries and manufactures, and you have no cause of complaint, I think the oftener your Governor, your Legislature, your able essayists, and your great and good men, shew a readiness to approach the national government, to give it just credit for what it deserves, and to support its measures, the more effectually will they baffle the wiles of those who wish that collisions may be eternal, wear off the edge of prejudices, and reconcile their opponents to the merit of their claim.

Otis urged the Massachusetts Federalists to vote for Monroe in 1816, instead of throwing their votes away on Rufus King, and he was largely instrumental in securing this sanction of him in 1820.[4] No other person had so pervasive an influence in promoting the "era of good feelings." Otis had no desire, however, to hold out the

[2] See esp. Christopher Gore's letters in *King*, VI, *passim*.

[3] Christopher Hughes to Monroe, April 13, 1816, citing a conversation with Otis. Monroe MSS., Library of Congress.

[4] Gore to King, June 2, 1822. *King*, VI, 474.

olive branch to the local democracy. At the end of the war the Federal party possessed the state governments not only in New England, but in Delaware and Maryland, and still constituted a formidable minority in New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and North Carolina. It had no intention of relinquishing its power without a battle. The Democrats made every effort, by harping on British influence, and the treason of the Hartford Convention, to discredit and defeat the Federalists in these, their last strongholds; and by 1819 they had succeeded in every state but Massachusetts. There the people reëlected Federalist officials with monotonous regularity until 1823 — a period that has been aptly called the "Indian summer of Federalism."

The general impression conveyed by most historians of this period to their readers, that the ex-members of the Hartford Convention were immediately consigned to political oblivion; that "twenty-six respectable men, politically dead, hung in their chains like Rizpah's sons,"[5] is far from correct. In national politics they were already proscribed because they were Federalists; in state politics their position was little changed. All of the twenty-six, who were not disqualified for political advancement by retirement or by the possession of judicial offices, were elected to positions of honor and trust by their fellow-citizens, even after the Democratic party had begun to control their respective states. Six were chosen delegates to state constitutional conventions;[6] six continued to serve in state legislatures;[7] Otis and Goddard were chosen mayors of their native cities; Longfellow

[5] Schouler, *United States*, II, 430.

[6] Joseph Lyman, Bliss, Longfellow, Prescott, Wilde, and Treadwell.

[7] Otis, Waldo, Hazard, Sherman, Bigelow, and Hall. Hazard successfully ran the gauntlet of fifty popular elections after the Hartford Convention took place.

was sent to Congress; and a number received appointive offices under the state governments.

Otis was decidedly the most conspicuous of this group. "You are aware," he wrote Theodore Dwight in 1828, "that a bountiful allotment of the odium attached to the Hartford Convention has been heaped upon me, and that a portion of the old Federal Party, when they ceased to have occasion for my services, thought it wise policy to give me up to appease the angry Gods of the old democracy, whose favor their new leaders were ambitious to conciliate, and whose resentment I had incurred as the putative father of their own offspring. . . . The very name is the Tallyho, at the sound of which the 'hounds are all out.'" Yet Otis was given frequent testimony of the popular confidence in his character and talents. In April, 1815, before he had returned from his mission to Washington, he was reëlected to the State Senate, and again the following year. Early in 1817 he received the highest honor of his life, a seat in the United States Senate, which he accepted in the belief that he was the person best qualified, by his leading part in the opposition of Massachusetts during the war, "to explain occasionally those proceedings without sacrificing his dignity, and to soften the prejudices and dilute the venom of party feeling to which she was exposed." [8] In other words, he regarded himself as an ambassador of peace and good will from Massachusetts Federalism to the national administration.

Mr. and Mrs. Otis went to Washington for the inaugural session of the Senate in March, 1817, and witnessed the inauguration of President Monroe. Mrs. Otis wrote her father her impressions of the scene on the 12th:

[8] Otis to William Sullivan, January 19, 1822. Manuscript collection of New York Public Library.

Lancaster, March 12th 1817.

. . . The forth of March was ushered in by the handmaids of June, not an unruly breeze ruffled the plaits of the best handkerchief or disturbed the locks of the best powdered Beau, and had Marshals been appointed and arrangements made, as they would have been with us, there never was a finer opportunity for a grand spectacle. but the differences between the two houses on the subject where the President should be received was derogatory to the Nation & effectually turned him out doors where under the Canopy of heaven the Oath was administered. — as there was no particular invitation or provision made for the diplomatic body — they of course could not appear — but the company assembled were in gay & handsome equipages well dressed and open; the multitude filling in back and front forming grotesque & fantastic groups, the contrariety of which are as light & shade in a well disposed picture — the number not equal I should think to those assembled on our last Artillery Election and by no means so well conditioned. A small scaffold received the *sages* of the nation, the two Presidents arrived, the one relinquished his credentials — the other received the Oath made his Speach which very few if any heard — made his bows & sat down. The Marshal now waved his white flag in mystic circle, that the People might rejoice — but whether grief at parting with one damped the pleasure expected on the acquisition of the other I know not — but certainly a very feeble acclamation was at length effected by a Comodore who came out with a *Huzza*, but it did not amount to a *boston cheer*. just at this moment as I stood on the box of our carriage an immense bird flew over the heads of the populace. Some imagined an eagle of glorious omen — but sorry am I to say that I could make nothing more nor less than an old Carolina acquaintance a Turkey buzzard. much laugh ensued & we turned our faces homeward; here the view was beautiful — the broad Pennsylvania Avenue three miles in length crowded as far as the eye could extend with carriages of every description, the sidewalks with foot passengers men women & children fiddles fifes & drums altogether presented a scene picturesque & animating. our next duty was to repair to the Palace to welcome the rising Sun, the concourse here appeared

greater than on the ground — it was nearly an hour before we could get to the door & then pushing our way through all the Scavengers & wash women of the City who were laying violent hands on the waiters of cake & refreshments that were prepared & intended for the company above — in this solid column I moved upstairs, was introduced to his majesty, greeted graciously & passed on to Madame who could do little more than bow to hundreds who contented themselves in merely bowing to her. as soon as decency would permit we hastened from this *jam* where one could with difficulty respire, to pass on to another no less *pressing* and *press'd*. Mrs. Madison behaved with her usual civility, she always finds time & occasion to speak to everybody, & what is a little remarkable never forgets the name of any one to whom she has been introduced — she was well dressed rather more pensive than common, but more interesting we all thought than ever. Mr. Madison was quite cheerful and conversible even complimentary — apparently glad to be rid of his Laborious State. I can easily imagine he is so. I therefore wished them all good and left them, glad to escape for an hours rest before joining a dinner party to which I was engaged at five & a grand inauguration Ball in the even'g — enough for one day.

Perhaps the chief instrument in smoothing over the bad feelings that survived the War of 1812, was President Monroe's visit to New England in 1817. Otis, in conversation with Christopher Hughes the previous year, "expressed a strong wish that the leading men at Washington, would travel during the recess more through the country, & particularly to these states & said that the popular & general reception would be very pleasing, & he thought useful in its effect." [9] Other leading Federalists made the same suggestion, and President Monroe, shortly after his inauguration, decided to take their advice. He planned to make a tour of the entire country, including New England, as Washington had done in 1789. Since Jefferson and Madison had never ventured into New

[9] Hughes to Monroe, April 13, 1816. Monroe MSS.

England during their terms of office, President Monroe's journey was symbolic of the new feeling of common nationality that peace had brought to the country. Otis realized what an opportunity the President's visit to the "headquarters of good principles" would offer for a Federalist demonstration of respect for his administration and of devotion to the Union. With characteristic hospitality he offered to place his entire house at the President's disposal. Monroe naturally refused to honor any one citizen to such a degree; but in a town meeting Otis was appointed chairman of a committee to prepare for his reception.

The local Democracy, not in the least relishing the idea of being eclipsed by their opponents in hospitality to the President, appointed a rival committee in order to waylay him en route. But Otis and his Federalist committee were too quick for them. They met the presidential cortège three days before it was due in Boston, at Providence, where, according to General Swift, the President's aide-de-camp, "Mr. Otis, in an eloquent address, alluded and compared the visit to its only precedent, that of Washington." The rival committee appeared at Pawtucket the next day, "giving me some trouble," writes Swift.[10] At Boston Neck, where the retinue arrived on July 3, the general was given further discomfiture by a squabble between the two committees as to which should take the presidential party in tow. The Federalist party bore off the palm, on account of its official character, and Otis on horseback proudly led the company into the city under triumphal arches, through crowded streets, and past bands of children wearing red and white roses as a symbol of the political peace. After the President had been installed in his lodgings at the Exchange Coffee-

[10] *Memoirs of General Joseph Gardner Swift*, 159.

House, a reception was held at the State House, where, again quoting General Swift, "the influence of fruit and champagne seemed to quiet for a time the ground swell of party."

The following week was one of ceaseless activity for the President, and for Otis, who was in his native element on occasions of this sort. As an example of how the President passed his time, the *Centinel's* account of his movements on Saturday, July 5, is most instructive. After a light breakfast he visited the navy yard, and commenced a thorough inspection of the buildings and vessels, which was interrupted by a "sumptuous and elegant *dejeuene*" at the residence of Commodore Hull, the commandant of the yard. "About noon the President mounted his charger and proceeded through Charlestown towards Breed's and Bunker's Hills," where he received survivors of the battle, inspected the old earthworks, heard speeches, and "partook of a neat collation on the *Heights of Bunker*." Then came a trip on the Middlesex Canal, dinner at four in the afternoon at Governor Brooks's mansion at Medford, and a return to Boston in time to hear an oratorio given in his honor by the Handel and Haydn Society. "He then honored Mr Otis with his company at a brilliant party" at his mansion on Beacon Street. A description of this concluding function of the day is preserved in a letter from William Howard Gardiner to William H. Prescott, the future historian:

> I was at what I presume may be called a rout — at Otis', on Saturday evening. There were at least 300 persons present, of whom about two thirds were introduced to the president. The introduction, together with some fireworks and a band of musick in the garden, were the amusements of the evening. Mr., Mrs., and Miss O. were all in their element — swimming in fashion and courtesy — saying and looking pretty things to all of their 300 *dear friends*. Mr. O. never left the presidents

side, but acted as a kind of gentleman-usher, a grand chamberlain to his majesty from the time of his entrance, to that of his exit.[11]

A few days after the President's departure from Boston, the *Centinel* made some pleasant comments on his visit under the heading "The Era of Good Feelings," a phrase that was later applied to the eight years of Monroe's administration. Modern historians have objected to the term as inaccurate. The period of Monroe, they argue, was one of bad, not good feelings, because the Republican party was breaking up into personal factions. But the mere fact that James Monroe had been received with open arms at Boston was sufficient indication that a great change had been wrought in party relations. And if, from any viewpoint, the era of his presidency be compared with the previous quarter of a century, the correctness of the *Centinel's* term is established. The party press apparently had established a truce, except during the month preceding an election, and even then its tone was calm compared with that of war-time. In society, the famous reconciliation of the Adams and Otis clans [12] prepared for a general breaking-down of party lines. George Ticknor was astonished, when he returned to Boston in 1819 after four years' absence in Europe, to find Judge Story and William Sullivan, George Blake and Daniel Webster, sitting down to dinner at the same table.[13]

Nowhere was the good feeling of the Monroe administration more apparent than at Washington. Otis's letters, written during his senatorship from 1817 to 1822, are most amusing to contrast with those of his embassy of 1815. At the earlier date he mingled only with the aristocratic Federalist coterie at Georgetown, and had nothing but contempt for the society of the White House; but in 1817,

[11] Prescott MSS. [12] See chap. XIII. [13] G. T. Curtis, *Webster*, I, 161.

having entered with enthusiasm into the official life of the capital, he found it only less delightful than the old Republican Court at Philadelphia. His letters frequently speak of members of the dominant party as his most intimate friends and associates — men like Henry Clay, John Quincy Adams, Henry Middleton, of South Carolina, and Senators Parrott, of New Hampshire, Macon, of North Carolina, Forsyth, of Georgia, and Williams, of Mississippi. The letters of Mrs. Otis to her daughters are full of accounts of drawing-rooms at the "palace," entertainments of various sorts given by Mrs. Secretary Adams, Mrs. Secretary Calhoun, the Tayloes of the Octagon House, and by the British and the French ministers. Otis even discovered that Joseph Gales, of the *National Intelligencer*, to whom he had referred as a "dirty editor" in 1815, was a cultivated and delightful gentleman, "and yet," he remarked, "if I had been told ten years ago that I should be at a great party *chez ce Monsieur*, I should have certainly placed my prophet among the uninspired."

Otis describes Washington as he saw it, in a letter to his father-in-law of February 27, 1817:

> Washington is undoubtedly on the increase. The public buildings are in progress to a state of reparation, though still bearing marks of the savage scene which disgraced its authors. The indications of improvement since I was here two years ago are unequivocal. Many houses have been built, and more are ordered to be put up this summer. Lots on the Pennsylvania Avenue (the principal street) are selling from 75 to 100 Cents the square foot. The state of society too is evidently improved — Indeed at this season, the *materials* of good society are in the greatest abundance, but there is a deficiency of cement to give it that body and shape which constitutes its charm. This defect however is not attributable to want of pressure, for if mere squeezing would form the Spirit as it consolidates the body of society, that of Washington should be perfect — As it is however we get on very well and are amused. we are not pursued

with Solicitations to dine and to evening parties *constantly*, but receive more than the ladies can accept, and quite as many as our neighbours. We have been twice to the Queen's drawing-room — To the French ministers one night, British ditto, and this day dined with the President. He and I are so gracious, that I am almost sorry it is too late for me to ask him for a place! The weather has been intensely cold here but we have not sufferd. The ground is still covered with ice and snow. The Potowmac is still fast and solid enough for carts opposite to this house, but will I think be rotten in a day or two. As to public affairs, I can tell you no news. There is no longer any demonstration of party feeling in the debates or votes of Congress. No man pretends to calculate the event of any question. The new administration will have more to apprehend from some of its friends and the orators whose road to popularity lies open to every splaw-footed brawler who cries out economy and votes against taxes. They have already given them some trouble and alarm.

A little more than a year later, on November 23, 1818, Otis wrote his youngest daughter:

My dear Sophia,

I wrote Mama yesterday about things in general and mentioned being at Madame De Neufville's [14] Saturday evening at a sort of halfway party, pour commencer. There was present a Signior Christiani or some such name, an Italian musician said to have great talent. He played and sang. His execution I thought good but his voice coarse, and yet the effect was on the whole agreeable to my ear, and to those of the amateurs it was delectable. They relied upon it as a striking instance of what may be done by perseverance and art, towards vanquishing natural impediments. He is to teach Madame Herredia, and Miss Middleton, and I presume will be quite the rage in all the parties. An ugly sinner however I think him; and it strikes me greatly to see this sort of character assume airs of perfect equality and familiarity with the great folks, from whom we have been lead to believe, they at home observe a respectful distance — There was here the first waltzing I have witnessed in Washington — Madame Bagot, Mme Herredia & Miss Onis

[14] The Baronne Hyde de Neuville, wife of the French minister.

were the ladies, and Antrobus, Fenwick, Bourgonnais (Dixhuit) and Hughes [15] the gentlemen concerned. It was merely a little jeu de moment on the carpet. Well executed however. Little Herredia dances with astonishing elegance for so light and small a figure. It is however I think an indecorous exhibition, though now much in vogue in England as Mrs. Middleton says "to the dismay of all mothers."

The following letter, of November 28, 1818, from Otis to his wife, describes a ball at the British ministry:

My dearest friend —

When the hour for dressing for the B Ministers ball arrivd, I was reluctant to quit my comfortable little room and a new book on political economy, but as is sometimes the case with you enjoyed the scene with tolerable satisfaction . . . At ½ past eight I found the rooms well filled and the dancing begun. The ball was certainly brilliant and well conducted. The company I should judge not less than 250. All the foreign ministers were present, stiffened and sparkling in their laced costumes, and the heads of departments excepting Mr. A[dams]. The ladies extremely well dressed in my judgment, and a general spirit of ease and affability pervaded the rooms. The floor of one dancing room was handsomely decorated by a circle chalk'd with white crayons, in the centre whereof was the armorial shield of Great Britain with the motto of Honi Soit, and on different parts of the circumference were drawn the Prince Regent's crest & other ornaments, which were scuffled over before my entrance. The floor of the other dancing room was chalked with a corresponding circle, containing the arms of the U S, and similar decorations. All your acquaintance was there — and some "that you never saw and never shall" the back buildings were occupied by cards. About ½ past ten supper was announced. Mrs. B[agot] determined to command the rear guard, and allowd me to be her aid. She expressed a fear in going upstairs lest they should give way. On coming to the top of the stairs, the eye was met by a display of showy ornaments at the extremity of the entry placed on tables forming a sort of

[15] Mrs. Charles Bagot, wife of the British minister, and niece of the Duke of Wellington. Miss Onis was the daughter of the Spanish minister, and the others, attachés of the British and French legations.

triple sideboard, the upper platform of which was decorated with plate and flowers and the lower one contained some very highly embellished dishes. The whole producing some thing like the effect of a handsome Roman Catholic altar. From this altar to the head of the stairs was laid one table protected from the wind and cold air by a curtain let down from the wall. Passing this table you discryed on each side into the two great chambers in which also tables were laid and covered with a most splendid variety of entremets, confectionary, porcelain and plate or plated ware. Probably some of both. The whole concern was extremely well conducted. I told Mrs. B—— that I was collecting materials for a description, which she modestly said it was not worthy of and added some civil expressions of your subject. I find it difficult to remove the impression generally made here that your absence is owing to your reluctance to leave the comforts of your own house. Mrs. B's dress I fear would not appear to much advantage in my description for want of apt words and discriminating ideas. It was certainly silk covered with muslin — whether light blue or pink I could not swear. But the border was of very rich lama, besides other trimmings of the same material. White Prince Regent feathers to the amount of half a dozen, perhaps intended for a crest, nodded from her pretty head, and contested in vain for the palm of whiteness with a bosom and shoulders which were dressed in the *depth* of the fashion; a diamond necklace added to the effect of these charms. Pour le reste you know that eating, drinking and dancing are always done in the same way and afford no room for observation.

During Otis's sojourn in Washington, the distinction between Federalists and Republicans was as obsolete in Congress as it was in Washington society. About half a dozen senators besides Otis, and a fair-sized minority in the House of Representatives, called themselves Federalists and were elected as such, but they never displayed in their voting anything of this distinction.[16] The Feder-

[16] There were forty nominal Federalists in the Fifteenth Congress (1817–19) — twenty from New England, ten from the Middle States and ten from the South — and twenty-seven in the Sixteenth Congress (1819–21). Niles, XIII, 163.

alists, in fact, uniformly supported the administration on questions of foreign policy against the quasi-opposition led by Henry Clay; and followed their sections on questions like the Missouri Compromise, internal improvements, and the tariff. The only matter that threatened to revive the bitter feelings of former times happened to be the subject of Otis's first speech in the Senate. A letter of December 9, 1818, to his wife explains the situation:

You may remember the story of Matthew Lyon in the old Congress twenty years ago. The beast that spat in Griswold's face, and was tried and fined for sedition under the old obnoxious sedition act. This man lately applied to Congress to have this money reimbursed from the Treasury on the ground of the *unconstitutionality* of the law, which *expired 18 years ago.* It was hardly supposed such a proposal would find advocates, but such is the case. A Member of Senate gave notice that he should *support* the petition, and *oppose* the report of a Committee of which I was one against it. This of course would bring into view the state of politicks and affairs in 1798 and upon looking round, I found myself the *only* remaining Federal member in *either house,* who voted for the bill, and one of *five,* the whole number, in both houses who composed the Congress of that day. This was no very pleasant predicament, but it was unavoidable and I determined at once, to shew them that I would not desert the cause of my old friends and shrink from my old principles when forced into discussion, Accordingly yesterday we had a debate of a more political and party character than has yet occurd. Crittenden and Barbour bore down upon the poor sedition act with full broadsides, & all eyes were turned towards me, as if meaning that I must give "my reasons on compulsion" — I never had a more difficult or delicate part to act. But I got through, and in consequence have receivd from King, Hunter, Hanson and many others compliments which I can't repeat, but from which I infer, and that is all I care to infer, that I have not committed my friends or myself, by a deficiency of firmness or redundancy of zeal. The skirmish will be renewd in the Senate today, but I shall probably say

no more. I think they will make a party question and carry it. It is of no great consequence, but who could have supposed that this dead Lion as he was thot to be, should have stirred up the ashes of an old flame that was extinguished 18 years ago.

Otis's speech had a more pronounced effect than he anticipated, for the proposal to reimburse Matthew Lyon for his sedition fine was defeated by a vote of seventeen to twenty.

It must be confessed, however, that Otis was not a success in the Senate. He spoke infrequently, served on no important committees, and seemingly took little interest in the vital questions of foreign policy that culminated in the Monroe Doctrine. The Missouri discussion was the only one in which he played the rôle to which his oratorical talents and his leadership in 1798 entitled him.[17] His position in the Senate was, to be sure, most difficult. Insinuations to the effect that he and his state had been guilty of treason during the late war, were frequently heard in debate. Conscious as Otis was of having exerted a restraining influence in a time of great popular excitement, this attitude on the part of his colleagues goaded him into making public the Journal of the Hartford Convention, and into publishing a formal defense of that body in the columns of the *National Intelligencer*,[18] under the transparent pseudonym of "One of the Convention." This action only made matters worse, for his long-winded articles contained, as John Quincy Adams observed, an "abundance of vulnerable matter."[19] Whatever beneficial effect they might have had on public opinion was neutralized by an anonymous writer who followed up Otis's articles with a clever exposition of the conspiracy

[17] See chap. xxx.

[18] January 8–22, 1820; afterwards published in pamphlet form as *Letters developing the Character and Views of the Hartford Convention.*

[19] *Memoirs*, VIII, 132.

theory of the Hartford Convention.[20] Unfortunately, it soon became a habit with Otis to publish formal defenses of this sort.

Otis afterwards flattered himself that he had succeeded in the principal object of his senatorial career, the softening of the national prejudice against Massachusetts. "It being apparent that I who was regarded as the arch fiend have neither horns nor a cloven foot nor a smell of brimstone, but on the other hand some features of a friend to his country, . . . it begins to be concluded that my Associates may not deserve the doom of eternal penance and that my State is not disgraced," he wrote.[21] But there is reason to believe that Otis overdid his policy of conciliation.[22] He acknowledged in later years that he never felt at home in the Senate; that, although he received civilities and formed friendships, he was "sensible of the shyness with which any measure is regarded, that comes from *Massachusetts*." [23] The administration never met him halfway in his offer of the olive branch. President Monroe appointed no Massachusetts Federalist to office, lest such an act would "have a tendency to revive that party on its former principle." [24] Otis failed similarly to accomplish another object in the promotion of which he applied much time and energy, — the payment of the Massachusetts war claim.

This claim, it will be remembered, was for the services of state militia, called out by Governor Strong dur-

[20] The same entry in Adams's diary states that the author was John Bailey, a clerk in the State Department, a fact which leads to the suspicion that the attack was inspired by Secretary Adams himself. They strongly resemble in style and matter his "Reply" of 1829. The articles are signed "Massachusetts"; and also appeared in the *Intelligencer*.

[21] To William Sullivan, January 19, 1822. MS. coll. of N.Y. Pub. Library.

[22] *King*, VI, 147–48.

[23] *Otis' Letters*, 69.

[24] To Andrew Jackson, December 14, 1816. Parton, *Jackson*, II, 363.

ing the war to protect the coast, but not placed under United States officers. The sum demanded amounted to a million dollars, and could only be satisfied by an act of Congress. Otis found the prejudice general at Washington that the militia in question were called out not to defend the state against the British, but to oppose the national government. He made every effort to correct this erroneous impression, and in some measure succeeded; but opponents to the claim replied that its payment would acknowledge the anti-national principle that a state has the right to judge whether or not a militia requisition from the President be lawful.[25] Since this was undoubtedly the correct attitude for the government to take, no criticism of it would now be possible, had the principle been applied consistently. But Connecticut, which had made the position of Massachusetts her own during the War, was reimbursed for a similar claim, after she had turned the Federalists out of office. Otis and his state, also, were given to understand that there would be no obstacle to their satisfaction, if Massachusetts elected a Democratic state government. In other words, the taxpayers of Massachusetts were offered a bribe of a million dollars, if they would choose officers agreeable to the dominant party at Washington.

One would think that state pride would have induced every Massachusetts man to support the claim, in the face of such insinuations, but the Democratic Congressmen from Massachusetts and Maine proved the principal obstacles in Otis's path. The cry that the Federalists had

[25] This objection applies only to a small portion of the claim, the greater part of which was for the services of militia called out by the governor in 1814 to resist invasion, without any requisition from or conflict with the general government. A committee of Congress admitted as much in 1824. *Am. State Papers, Military Affairs*, IV, 293. Claims of like nature from other states were paid without question.

lost the state a million dollars was too valuable a portion of their political capital to be abandoned. It was due to their opposition that Otis never dared to bring the claim to a vote in Congress.[26] In the face of such difficulties, his course was dignified and correct, but impotent. He saw that Massachusetts must observe a dignified forbearance, and refrain from the blustering tone of the war period, but at the same time claim the compensation as a matter of right, not of favor. In an open letter on the subject, written shortly after his resignation from the Senate,[27] he concluded as follows:

Whatever may be the fate of the claim, I venture to predict that any allowances made towards it will never be the fruit of disavowals or retractions, but a result of a conviction . . . of the correctness of the principles maintained by those who have heretofore been charged with the solicitation of the claim. For it is not competent to Congress nor to the Executive Government to make a grant to Massachusetts of a million dollars, more or less, as a bounty. If the State has a claim in law or equity upon the national treasury, it ought to be paid — but if otherwise, it is a nullity: And there is no power in the Constitution enabling Congress to convert an unfounded demand into a just claim, on condition of disavowing political heresies, or of any sort of truckling or humiliation, — no power to give us on our knees, what we are not entitled to receive in the erect posture of an independent State.

[26] *Centinel*, December 26, 1818, and joint letter of Otis and Senator Mellen of December 22. (See Bibliography).

[27] *Centinel*, June 28, 1823; *Otis' Letters*, 98–103.

CHAPTER XXX

SLAVERY EXTENSION

1797–1821, ÆT. 32–56

We have now reached that period in the life of Harrison Gray Otis, when the numerous questions connected with negro slavery were becoming more and more important for his country. As a Senator of the United States he participated in the great debate over the Missouri situation from 1819 to 1821, which aroused in the statesmen and thinkers of the age a realization of the serious problem that slavery had become. This was neither the first nor the last time that Otis was confronted with the slavery question. As a member of the Fifth Congress in 1798 he had helped to establish a disastrous precedent by admitting slavery to a territory of the United States; and the best efforts of his later years were devoted to counteracting the doctrines of Garrisonian abolition.

Otis viewed negro slavery from the standpoint of a conservative Northern gentleman. He had the slight moral repugnance for it that was common to almost all Northerners, but his conscience was not greatly troubled by the existence of wrongs which he did not feel or see. A typical expression of his attitude appears in a letter to Mrs. Otis, written January 5, 1819, after a visit to the plantation of a Mr. Fitzhugh near Washington:

> He has *eleven thousand* acres in a body and nearly 200 slaves. If he would sell the latter and give away the land, he would be richer and happier ten years hence than by keeping the whole. I told him so plainly, and he assented. But he has a reluctance

at selling the poor creatures. It is natural to a good mind like his. Thank God slavery does not exist with us. "I would not have a slave to till my ground," etcetera.

At this period, and in his earlier life, Otis's moral repugnance to slavery was never strong enough to make him oppose its extension, when such action would endanger his political necessities; and it never became sufficiently pronounced to make him favor its abolition, when he considered that such action would endanger the duration of the Union.

Otis was forced to take sides on a slavery question as early as 1797. While he was in the Fifth and Sixth Congresses, there occurred three debates on the subject that attracted little attention at the time, but nevertheless showed every shade of pro- and anti-slavery opinion that was common forty and fifty years later.

One concerned the right of Congress to receive petitions on the subject of slavery, the perennial topic of the eighteen-thirties and forties. It was occasioned by the presentation, in January, 1800, of a petition from a number of Philadelphia negroes, complaining of the violation of various laws, and praying Congress to prepare the way for a general emancipation of their race. John Rutledge, flaring up immediately, demanded that the petition be thrown under the table. Otis then arose and supported his South Carolina friend as follows:

I hope the petition will not be committed . . . I have never seen a petition presented under a more dangerous and unpleasant aspect. It appears to be subscribed by a number of individuals who are incapable of writing their names, or of reading the petition, and *a fortiori*, of digesting the principles of it. It will have an irritating tendency, and must be mischievous to America very soon. It will teach them the art of assembling together, debating, and the like. . . . Although, I thank God, I have no slaves, nor ever wish to possess any, yet

I think the subject ought not to be meddled with by the General Government, and if any grievances exist they are properly and only subjects of legislation in the several states. Those who do not possess that species of property had better leave its regulation to those who are cursed with it.[1]

Instructive as this discussion undoubtedly was, the debate of March, 1798, on extending slavery into Mississippi Territory, was of greater practical importance. Slavery had been excluded from all the territory north of the Ohio River by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, but no regulations had yet been made for that part south of the Ohio, until in March, 1798, a bill was introduced in Congress to organize the Territory of Mississippi. The bill provided for a government like that of the Northwest Territory, with the important exception that slavery was not prohibited. George Thacher, a Maine Federalist far in advance of his time,[2] moved to strike out this exception, and fulfill the original purpose of Jefferson to prohibit slavery in all the territory of the United States. Rutledge immediately denounced this proposition as an invitation to the blacks to cut their masters' throats, and reminded Thacher that suggestions such as his "did much mischief [to the Federal party] in certain parts of the Union." Otis wished "all the gentlemen who came from the same part of the Union with him to manifest that it is not their disposition to interfere with the Southern States as to the species of property referred to," and argued that an extension of slavery would not increase the number of slaves.[3] Thacher exposed the fallacy of this reasoning; but when his amendment came to a vote, only twelve members answered *yea;* and slavery was extended into the remaining territory of the United States.

[1] *Annals of Sixth Congress*, 231. [2] Hildreth, *United States*, v, 183.
[3] *Annals of Fifth Congress*, 1306–13.

Historians have not sufficiently appreciated the importance of this decision. The Mississippi Territory Act of 1798, and not the Missouri Compromise of 1820, was the vital point where the advocates of slavery extension won over slavery restriction. Had the humanity of the Northern Representatives in the Fifth Congress been equal to their voting power,[4] they might have added to the Northwest Ordinance another precedent for slavery restriction. But, like Otis, they were more anxious to avoid an imputation of unfriendliness to the South, than to strike a blow for free labor and free institutions.

Unless he really believed his statement, that opening a new country to slavery would not increase the number of slaves, Otis must have realized that his efforts tended to enlarge the political power of Southern slaveholders. Possibly this was his object. The Federal party was then growing in the South; and no doubt a good understanding existed between Otis and his friends Harper and Rutledge, that the Northern merchants and Lower South slaveholders should support each other's interests. Such a bargain was afterwards the basis of the Whig party. When the South went almost solidly Democratic in 1800, and Jefferson was elected by virtue of the electoral votes based on three fifths of the slave population, Otis and his colleagues appreciated that the slaveholding interests had discovered an affinity in Jeffersonian Democracy, and that all new states admitted from slaveholding territory would add so much to the strength of Democracy and the South. This situation led to their various attempts, between 1804 and 1815, to secure constitutional amendments abolishing representation based on slaves, and checking

[4] There were 57 Representatives in the Fifth Congress from the north side of Mason and Dixon's Line; 49 from the south side; and an equal number of Senators from either side.

the admission of new states. But the Federal party never upheld a moral or political opposition to slavery itself. Otis would probably have opposed, during this period, a general emancipation of the slaves, because, as has been the case since the Civil War, that would have increased still more the political power of the Southern whites.

The Missouri debates of 1819 next brought Otis face to face with slavery. The question was practically the same as that of 1798, whether Congress could or should permit the further extension of slavery; but the task of preventing such extension was bound to be more difficult than twenty years before. In 1798 the cotton-gin had been invented but seven years. During the intervening quarter-century the system of cotton culture by slave labor had become vastly more profitable; and the nature of that system was such that it constantly required new lands for exploitation. Emigrant slaveholders had passed the Mississippi, and without any restraint from Congress, were occupying the fertile valleys of its western tributaries. The application of Missouri for admission, with a slavery constitution, as the second state to be formed west of the Mississippi, brought on a struggle between North and South, free labor and slave labor, to establish their respective systems in the vast territory of the Louisiana Purchase.

The issue was raised in the House of Representatives on February 13, 1819, when James Tallmadge, of New York, proposed an amendment to the pending Missouri Bill, providing that further introduction of slaves into the new state be prohibited, and that all slaves born in the state after admission be free at the age of twenty-five. He followed this proposal with a brilliant plea for the restriction of slavery on moral grounds. The Tallmadge

amendment passed the House, but the Senate rejected it by a vote of 22 to 16. Otis voted with the majority; and thus lost a second opportunity to check the advance of slavery.

Otis voted blindly, as he shortly afterwards acknowledged. Not perceiving the significance of the issue, he was moved by the Southern argument that slavery was already a vested interest in Missouri, and he saw no reason for changing his usual policy of reconciling the Southern Senators to Massachusetts and the Massachusetts claim.[5] It was not long before he realized his mistake, and saw that on this issue depended the question whether "Virginian" rule should be perpetuated, or the balance of power be righted in favor of the free states. He was converted, apparently, by a remarkable speech delivered by Rufus King in the Senate debate. Senator King disdained to make a moral argument against slavery extension, and approached the subject purely from a political standpoint. He showed that, by virtue of the federal ratio of representation, the Southern whites already had twenty Representatives and twenty electoral votes based on slave population; that the further extension of slavery would be unjust to the free states and fatal to their interests. He demonstrated by precedent and constitutional interpretation that Congress had not only the right, but the duty, of imposing a slavery restriction on a new state as well as on a territory.[6]

Rufus King's speech aroused the spirit of the North; his arguments were flung back at Congress from mass meetings and legislative bodies in every Northern State.

[5] A writer in the Boston *Chronicle & Patriot*, January 12, 1820, argued against insisting on slavery restriction in Missouri, because it would prevent the adjustment of the Massachusetts war claim.

[6] *King*, VI, 690–703. Cf. H. C. Hockett, "Rufus King and the Missouri Compromise," *Missouri Hist. Rev.*, II, 211–20.

Otis, like most men at Washington, was astounded at this united expression of Northern sentiment, which he had always considered hopelessly unattainable. But unfortunately, Rufus King's arguments had the ring of New England Federalism; they were those employed in the Massachusetts legislature in 1804, and in the Hartford Convention. John Quincy Adams suggested that Rufus King was trying to revive the Federal party on an anti-slavery platform,[7] and the South interpreted his action in the same way. Although King's correspondence acquits him of any such design, the belief had great influence on the course of events.

Otis's attitude is shown clearly in the following letters to William Sullivan.[8] Convinced, like his colleague, that the Missouri question was of vital import to his section, he disdained to use it to revive the old Federal party, and even saw the necessity of old Federalists keeping in the background, in order to avoid such a suspicion.

Washington 9 feby 1820

Dear General:

I think the Massachusetts resolutions on the Missouri question are about right, and if they are to be passed, it is no matter with how much unanimity. — My opinion is still the same that no good purpose would have been promoted by your being more prominent or zealous, but tout au contraire. — Let the other white peopled States commit themselves as much as possible, and let us support them. — Had we foreseen all that has happened, before I left home, I think I could have made some useful suggestions — But I am persuaded that if you had tried to lead, you would not have been follow'd with the same alacrity by the other States. — Some of my best friends however think otherwise.

It is a fact, though to my shame be it spoken, that none of us anticipated the magnitude and political tendency of this ques-

[7] *Memoirs*, IV, 529, 533; H. C. Hockett, *op. cit.*, 218–19.

[8] From the Manuscript collection of the New York Public Library.

tion last year.[9] — Mr. King admits that he did not — Indeed I first told him of the debate in the house, and he treated the question as of little or no importance, but of this more hereafter. It was the terror discovered by the opposition that opened my eyes, while on my road hither — I awoke as from a trance. The thing has now taken such a turn that first or last probably Missouri will gain her point, though the restriction will be applied to the territories. But we ought to have stopped it, in toto — and the sceptre would then have passed from the ancient dominion forever. As it is, her hand shakes — Pennsylvania unanimous against her is what she has never seen that I remember. It is a fearful looking for of judgment to her — But she may yet come upon her legs. — The fear of federalism and of *Massts* federalism may save her. . . .

[Washington. February 13, 1820]

Dear Sir,

I send you a Richmond enquirer, whence you will be able to discern the movements in Virginia. — The Caucus it seems in *that State*, will not nominate Munroe untill they ascertain that he will reject a bill compromising the Missouri question, should such a bill pass — Thus you see they are reviving the system of intimidation by which they have always governed the Union. — The object is to shake weak and wavering folks in the House of Representatives. — The times require great firmness and prudence on your part — Let the Democracy *lead*, and urge them into the foreground, and take care to *support* them — Let them be irretrievably committed on the slave question before the fears on this subject become merged in their fears of federalism which are always likely to predominate. — Dont permit violent expressions, or reflections, or recrimination to appear in the *Federal* papers; but let them show a firm solemn determination — and if you can manage so as to cause to be inserted in the Democratic papers essays a little higher spiced, I know of no injury that would come from it. — On this you should have an understanding among you. — If the House stands firm, and Virginia resists compromise, and the bill is

[9] Cf. J. Q. Adams's Diary, under date of February 20, 1820: "When the amendment was first presented, its importance and consequences were certainly forseen by no one, not even by those who brought it forward."

lost — Amen — I shall not be frightened at the prospect of consequences, — If the house gives way and the bill passes without restriction, their feet will be upon our necks forever. — But for Gods sake, let our course be dignified and erect, but not marked by intemperate expressions or local caustic satire — Express always the desire of Union, which we all feel, but say boldly, that if it can't be had, but by a farther subversion of the political ballance, you are sorry but will not consent to that — See a little to the Salem papers and other federal papers out of town, and persuade our friends in those concerns to give the editors this cue. — You may show this to Mr. Mills — to Perkins, and to any discreet friend, but dont quote me, nor print me — You will have the extracts printed of course. — Is it not a queer world? Just as I have demonstrated that Massachusetts did not mean to break up the Union; (for which by the way I have not yet had "woman, child or man" to say thank ye) it is about to be shown by Virginia that the thing itself is no crime.

Yours in haste, very truly H. G. Otis.

Burn this after you have done with it

Before Otis reached these conclusions, the town of Boston, under the leadership of the versatile William Tudor, had placed itself in the forefront of the new movement. At a great meeting in the State House on December 3, 1819, Daniel Webster presented the anti-slavery case with his usual skill, and a strong memorial was sent to Congress.[10] But before long complaints were made that by influence from Washington — Otis's letters, evidently — anti-slavery was being hushed up in the Federalist press.[11] Curiously enough, John Lowell, the fire-eater of 1814, and Josiah Quincy, the leader of the movement against the admission of Louisiana, added their influence

[10] *Centinel*, December 4, 1819; Webster's *Works* (National edition), xv, 55–72; *King*, vi, 272.

[11] Letters from Gore in *King*, vi, 259–61, 280, 349.

to that of Otis;[12] while William Tudor and John Quincy Adams, both of whom were inveterate critics of the Hartford Convention for its supposed disunion tendencies, were almost ready for a secession of the North if Missouri entered the Union as a slave state.[13] Otis's counsels prevailed, and Massachusetts was kept well in the background — she "cowers under the arrogant pretentions of Virginia," wrote Christopher Gore. But Otis did not succeed in killing the bogy of a Federalist renaissance. Thomas H. Benton, on arriving at Washington in 1820, found that idea prevalent among Northern Democrats, and believed it to be their chief reason for supporting the Compromise.[14]

The Northern view of the Missouri argument was expressed calmly though firmly; but the same statement cannot be made of the opposite movement south of Mason and Dixon's line. Virginia, in particular, lashed herself into a tremendous fury over the arrogance of Northern politicians in presuming to limit slavery. "The land is *ours*, and we will have it, and hold and use it as we please," said John Randolph of Roanoake.[15] Virginia had ruled the Union so long that her statesmen, like the deposed Essex Junto in 1804, were willing to break it up rather than relinquish their power.[16] The proposed restriction of slavery, moreover, touched her pocket, for

[12] *King*, 260, 273. Lowell, who returned in January from a journey to Virginia and the Carolinas, was so impressed with the vehemence of the people there on the Missouri question that he was convinced that slavery restriction would be followed by secession on their part.

[13] *King*, 274, and see above, p. 159.

[14] Benton, *Thirty Years' View*, 10.

[15] *Life and Letters of Joseph Story*, I, 362.

[16] Judge Spencer Roane, who denounced the theories of Hartford Convention Federalism as "anarchical doctrines" in 1814, was ready to secede in 1820, if the "Eastern intriguers" prevented Missouri from entering the Union as a slave state. *J. P. Branch Historical Papers of Randolph-Macon College*, II, 18; *William and Mary College Quarterly*, X., 18.

the only flourishing industry in Virginia at that time was breeding slaves for export.[17] There was also the question of state rights. Congress could restrict slavery only under the theories of federal supremacy and implied powers — theories which the Supreme Court had recently invoked to lower the pretensions of the Old Dominion. Her political seers feared lest the combination of loose construction principles with an increase in the number of free states, might lead to the abolition of slavery by the federal government.[18]

The result of all this agitation in the autumn and winter of 1819 was to key up to a dangerous point the members of the Sixteenth Congress, which first met in December of that year. In the first place, the Missouri question was complicated by the fact that Maine was ready for admission as a state. A bill to carry out its desires passed the House on January 3, 1820, and, on arriving in the Senate, was referred to the Judiciary Committee, of which Otis was a member. Much against his wishes, the committee tacked the Maine bill to another, admitting Missouri *with* slavery. This was a clever manœuvre on the part of the pro-slavery forces, for as Massachusetts had given its assent to the separation of Maine only if Congress should agree by March 4, 1820, the friends of Maine were forced to support slavery in Missouri or leave the new Eastern State stranded.

When the Maine-Missouri Bill was reported in the Senate, on January 13, 1820, there commenced one of the most prolonged, significant, and ably conducted debates that have ever occupied that body. First, an attempt was made by Otis and several other Northern leaders to recommit and separate the two sections of the bill; but their

[17] W. E. Dodd, *Nathaniel Macon*, 314.
[18] F. J. Turner, *Rise of the New West*, chap. XVIII.

efforts were frustrated on January 14 by a vote of 25 to 18. Then began the vital debate on the bill itself, and on renewed motions to impose a slavery restriction on Missouri. Otis made the greatest effort of his senatorial career in answer to William Pinkney's celebrated oration of January 24. After Pinkney, a master of the flamboyant school of rhetoric, had held a huge audience spellbound for five hours, Otis's reply,[19] the delivery of which occupied the whole of the next day's session, must have seemed rather an anti-climax. It was unnecessarily long and pedantic, beginning with a minute exposition of the treaty in question and of the powers of Congress, and concluding with an exposure of the fallacy of the Southern argument (which he himself had supported in 1798), that a diffusion of slavery would mitigate the acknowledged evils of the system. The speech had at least the merit of straightforwardness, for Otis, like Rufus King, frankly acknowledged that his motives for opposing slavery extension were not moral, but political:

> I acknowledge too [said he] that I am not influenced by maxims or indications from any religious or moral code, that might serve as a rule for my private conduct, or for my opinions as a man, neither do the claims of humanity, as affecting the wretched beings who are doomed to bondage, decide me in my course on this occasion. I look to it entirely as a question of policy, affecting the equitable right of the various parts of the Union, and the security and welfare of the whole people, now and hereafter.

For three weeks longer the debate continued, growing more intense towards the close, with frequent threats of secession from the Southern members if their wishes were not carried out. On February 16, 1820, the Maine-Mis-

[19] *Annals of Cong.*, 16th Cong., 1st Sess., 237–55. Also printed separately — see Bibliography.

souri Bill passed, without the slavery restriction, by a vote of 23 to 21. All the slave state Senators, and the two from Illinois, voted in favor of, Otis and all the other Northerners against, the bill. It was certain, however, that the proposition could not pass the House in that form. Senator Thomas, of Illinois, therefore introduced an amendment calculated to reconcile the anti-slavery Congressmen. It provided that slavery should forever be prohibited in the territory of the Louisiana Purchase, north of 36 degrees 30 minutes (the southern boundary of Missouri), excepting in the State of Missouri. Thus the lion's share, out of which eight states have been formed, was left free soil; while only the Territory of Arkansas, including part of the present State of Oklahoma, remained open to slavery. This was the famous Missouri Compromise. After a complicated series of manœuvres, the Compromise passed the House and the Senate on March 2 and 3, with Otis and Rufus King still voting against it, because they considered the concession insufficient. Maine was admitted to the Union by a separate act.

Even now the Missouri problem was not solved. The new state drew up a constitution containing a provision against the admission of free negroes from other parts of the United States, and applied to Congress for admission at the beginning of the next session, in December, 1820. The Northern leaders, regarding this clause as a violation of that provision in the United States Constitution guaranteeing to the citizens of each state the "privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states," refused to admit Missouri unless the proviso were expunged. The contest which followed was more heated and more dangerous to the Union than that of the previous winter, for each side considered that the other was endeavoring to break the Compromise. Otis made an excellent speech on

the anti-slavery side on December 9, 1820.[20] The issue hinged mainly on the question whether free Negroes were "citizens." Senator Smith of South Carolina argued, by an exhaustive exposition of the disabilities under which that class suffered, that they were not. Otis, in a terse and forcible reply, insisted that in spite of their disabilities, free negroes were as much citizens as women and children. He showed from historical sources that free blacks had always been considered citizens in Massachusetts—an argument that resembled the dissenting opinion of Judge Curtis in the Dred Scott case. He also attempted, in the following words, to repel the insinuation that he sought to undermine slavery where it already existed:

> I am desirous of their [the slaves] realizing . . . that all considerate persons in every section of the Union will unite with one accord with their masters in putting down every species of revolt and insurrection, as pregnant with dreadful calamities to the whole nation. This has ever been my feeling and my language. But, with these convictions, I shall strenuously and forever oppose the extension of slavery, and all measures which will subject a freeman, of whatever color, to the degradations of a slave. Believing, therefore, that every free citizen of color in the Union is joint tenant with myself in the public lands of Missouri, . . . and that he is entitled to his protection equally with those born to a happier destiny, I cannot consent to an act which would divest him of his property and rights, and interdict him from even passing into a country of which he is a legitimate coproprietor with myself.

As in the previous contest, the South controlled the Senate and the North the House, so that a deadlock lasted until February 21, 1821. A compromise, finally arranged by Henry Clay, admitted Missouri with the understanding that the objectionable clause should not be so construed as to violate the Constitution of the United States. On

[20] *Annals of Cong.*, 16th Cong., 2d Sess., 88–99.

this measure, which passed both House and Senate, Otis voted *nay*.

Once the second Missouri Compromise passed, the excitement quickly subsided, and the country was given a brief repose from slavery discussion. Much ink has since been wasted by partisan writers on both sides of Mason and Dixon's Line, to prove that the Compromise was forced on one section or the other against its will. At the time, the radicals on each side felt that they were cheated; the moderates on each side believed they had gained the victory. The South secured Missouri as a slave state, and the permanence of slavery in that section of the Louisiana territory that was susceptible of speedy settlement.[21] The North secured the greater expanse of territory, and the principle of slavery restriction in the territories. But Otis and Rufus King voted against the Compromise because they saw that "the pretended Concession, for it is revocable at pleasure" — being a legislative act and not a constitutional amendment — "is itself of no value."[22] They evidently foresaw what actually happened, that the South would secure new slave territory to the south and west by purchase or conquest, and then break the Missouri Compromise as soon as the North was likely to derive any benefit from it.

[21] Charles Pinckney, who voted against the Compromise, wrote nevertheless: "We have carried the question to admit Missouri and all Louisiana to the southwest of 36 degrees 30 minutes free of the restriction from slavery, which will include Arkansas and the Floridas, and give the southern interest in a short time an addition of six, and perhaps eight members in the Senate. It is considered here by the slave-holding states as a great triumph . . . To the north of 36 degrees 30 minutes, there is to be by the present Law, restriction, which you will see by the votes I voted against. But it is at present of no moment; it is a vast tract, inhabited only by savages and wild beasts. . . . and in which . . . no Land Office will be opened for a great length of time." This letter was printed in the Boston *Centinel*, early in March, 1820, under the heading "Cloven foot uncovered."

[22] *King*, VI, 288; cf. 290, 296–97.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE FEDERAL PARTY

1820–1828, ÆT. 55–64

During his senatorship, Otis kept in close touch with local politics. Several important questions of special interest to him came up in this period: the separation of Maine from Massachusetts, the Massachusetts constitutional convention, and the movement to procure a city charter for Boston. The first subject was not new. During the year 1816, when he was in the State Senate, Otis had twice acted as chairman of a committee to which petitions for separate statehood from the District were referred, and he made a report on the subject which was characterized by his inveterate opponent, John Holmes, as one of the ablest state papers he had ever heard. Otis believed that if a clear majority of the people of Maine wished for separation, they were entitled to it. He regretted a division of the old Bay State, especially at a time when her influence in the Union was already on the wane; but possibly he found consolation in the thought that separation would remove from Massachusetts a stronghold of Democracy, "giving us a snug little Federal state for the rest of our lives," as one Federalist put it.[1]

After the separation of Maine, it was considered necessary in Massachusetts to call a constitutional convention. Public opinion, even within the Federal party, demanded certain democratic modifications of the Constitution of

[1] E. Quincy, *J. Quincy*, 374.

1780. The Federalists wished, however, to keep the spirit of innovation within proper bounds, and especially to preserve the property basis for representation in the Senate. By Otis's advice, they united with the Democrats in electing as delegates several of the older and more conservative members of that party. Judge Isaac Parker, the president of the convention, wrote Otis on January 10, 1821, that the result was most happy; party spirit had disappeared, and "the whole talent of the Democratic party was arrayed on the side of sound principle and good order." Judge Story received his highest encomiums, and "Even Dana," Parker admitted, "has done us much good, and Varnum become exceedingly docile and clever." The action of the convention was eminently restrained, and the vote of the people on the amendments it proposed was even more conservative. Abolition of the religious test for office and the property qualification for voting, was the net result. Even these amendments made no practical difference, for the old sixty-pounds property qualification in the Constitution of 1780 had long been a dead letter.[2]

[2] As far back as 1786 the provision that a voter must have an "estate of the value of sixty pounds, or of a yearly value of three pounds," was commonly construed as meaning any man capable of earning the latter sum yearly. In practice, every man who had a settled residence and paid the poll-tax was allowed to vote. Wm. H. Sumner, *Increase Sumner*, 16; cf. G. D. Luetscher, *Early Political Machinery*, chap. I. This interpretation is evident from the fact that the total vote cast in state elections did not increase after 1820. The vote for governor in Massachusetts proper from 1817 to 1819 was as follows:

1817	Brooks	35,414	Dearborn	24,723
1818	"	30,530	Crowninshield	18,632
1819	"	35,588	"	26,275

Compare these figures with those of the years 1820–23 in note 13 to this chapter. It will be observed that the total vote actually decreases for a number of

A local question that occupied much of Otis's time and thought during the year 1822 was the transformation of Boston from a town into a city.[3] Between the years 1784 and 1815 there were five separate attempts to secure a municipal government for Boston, all of which had been thwarted by the attachment of the people to their town-meeting form of government. One of Otis's earliest speeches in town meeting was in defense of such a proposition in 1791, and in 1804 he had been a member of a non-partisan committee that drew up a plan of municipal government, which the people rejected. By 1821, however, it was clear that something decisive must be done. Since Faneuil Hall could not hold more than a small portion of the voting population, the government and finances of a town of about 45,000 inhabitants were controlled by those who were sufficiently energetic and interested to come early, secure places near the moderator, and elect the selectmen and committees. The fact that these persons had invariably been the leading Federalists, men of unquestioned character and ability, was no guarantee that others might not usurp their places, and profit by the opportunities for corruption that so loose and irresponsible a system offered.

At a town meeting of October 22, 1821, a committee of thirteen was appointed to consider and report on the advisability of changing the town form of government.

years after 1819. Even in a hundred years the proportion of voters to the total population in Massachusetts has scarcely changed:

	Population of Mass.		Total vote for Governor
1810	700,745	1812	104,156
1910	3,366,410	1911	440,020

[3] James Mascarene Hubbard, "Boston's Last Town Meeting and First City Election," in *Bostonian Society Publications*, VI.

A majority of the committee consisted of prominent Federalists,[4] with one of whom, William Sullivan, Otis corresponded at length on the subject before them. A rough outline of a city government was accepted by a town meeting on December 31, 1821, and adopted by popular vote a week later. There was to be a single executive, the mayor, elected annually, and a legislature, consisting of a board of aldermen chosen at large, and a common council of delegates from the wards. Sullivan wrote Otis that the committee was indifferent to the exact form of the municipality, but that this scheme pleased the people because it reproduced, on a small scale, the form of government familiar to them. Otis, however, found much to criticize. He observed that the office of mayor was superfluous, if he were allowed to exercise no power except by "advice and consent" of the board of aldermen. He found fault with a provision granting the common council the authority, formerly possessed by the town meeting, to fix the number of representatives to the General Court. "You should have given," he objected, "no temptation to your Town Government to dabble in politicks." He was particularly opposed to abolishing the old method of holding state and federal elections in Faneuil Hall, in favor of separate polling-places, since he feared that a change would break up the power of the Federal party.[5] "It is easier to manage the town of B——," he wrote, "by a Lancastrian system of political discipline than to institute numerous schools."[6]

[4] Including Webster, Prescott, Quincy, and Lemuel Shaw.

[5] Otis to Sullivan, January 8, 13 and 19, 1822. MS. coll. of N.Y. Pub. Libr.

[6] Cf. chap. xvi. Otis's influence on this question of the manner of voting is evident in an amendment that the legislature added to the city charter, providing that all elections should be held in Faneuil Hall. The people, however, rejected it when they accepted the rest of the charter.

Otis's name was mentioned for the office of mayor while the charter movement was still in its early stages. William Sullivan promised to mount the stump for him, if he desired to "live in the mansion house," and Thomas H. Perkins formally inquired whether he would accept the nomination. Although such an offer to a United States Senator could not be very flattering, it was not unpleasant now that Otis's term was drawing to a close. He was thoroughly sick of Washington and discouraged about the Massachusetts claim, he already had his eye on the governorship, and possibly regarded the mayoralty as a convenient stepping-stone. Otis therefore promised to "yield to the wishes of his fellow citizens," if a "general unsolicited sentiment" prevailed among them that his "humble services might be useful in the organization of the new government." But he did not wish to be "run against any other Gentleman of the Federal party who might be thought of." [7]

Unfortunately for Otis's municipal aspirations, an insurgent movement, known as the "Middling Interest," sprang up just at this time in the ranks of Boston Federalism. It was a protest of the small shopkeepers and mechanics, who formed the bone and sinew of the party, against the Federalist machine, which gave their class few offices or nominations, and disregarded their interests. They objected, in particular, to a law that forbade the erection of wooden buildings more than ten feet in height within the limits of Boston.[8] Otis, thoroughly alarmed at this "revolutionary movement," as he called it, wrote Sullivan to negotiate with the leaders; but the Middling Interest attached itself to Josiah Quincy, an-

[7] Open letter of Thomas H. Perkins in the *Centinel*, April 10, 1822.

[8] *An Exposition of the Principles and Views of the Middling Interest, in the City of Boston*, Boston, May, 1822; Boston *Patriot*, April 6, 1822.

other aspirant for the mayoralty, and proposed his name at the local Federalist nominating caucus on April 4. Otis received 175 votes to Quincy's 170, and therefore received the official Federalist nomination. Quincy's supporters, however, refused to abide by the result. Some claimed that the nomination had been "stolen" by illegal voting; some, who were more frank, said that Otis's majority was too small to be binding. The Middling Interest held a caucus the same evening, and formally nominated Quincy in opposition to Otis.[9]

The astonishment and indignation of Boston Federalism at Quincy's "bolt" may well be imagined. Otis himself, five days distant in Washington, knew nothing of what was going on until the election took place, and since his friends were too indignant to carry out his orders, and withdraw his name,[10] there resulted the undignified spectacle of a United States Senator and a distinguished ex-member of Congress competing for a mayoralty. Quincy, as it turned out, spoiled Otis's chances without gaining anything for himself. The count after the election showed Quincy, 1736; Otis, 1384; scattering, 580. As no one candidate received a majority of the total vote, there was no choice.[11] On the following day the names of both Otis and Quincy were withdrawn, and at a second polling, on April 16, John Phillips, a Federalist acceptable to the Middling Interest, was elected almost unanimously the first mayor of Boston.

Otis's mortification at this, his first defeat since 1795, was so pathetic as to move that cynical Democratic poli-

[9] I follow the facts as given in the letters of Daniel Webster (*Works*, National ed., XVI, 68–69), in contemporary newspapers, and in J. M. Hubbard's article in *Bostonian Society Publications*, VI, 113–14. The *Life of Quincy* (p. 393) is most misleading on this subject.

[10] See Perkins's letter, following this chapter.

[11] The city charter provided that one candidate must receive a majority of the total vote cast, to be elected.

tician, Martin Van Buren, to write: "I have frequently figured to myself the distress he must have undergone & from my heart felt sorry for him, for with all his excentricities & imperfections there is something about him which I like & especially his uncommon devotedness to his family." [12] His old popularity was evidently on the wane; the silvery orator, the veteran of two Congresses and seventeen General Courts, was second to another in the estimation of his fellow-citizens. Within a month he resigned his position in the Senate, now too humiliating to sustain.

In the mean time the people of Massachusetts had been electing Federalist state administrations with monotonous regularity.[13] General Brooks, who replaced Caleb Strong at the head of the ticket in 1816, after Otis had refused the nomination, was dignified, efficient and popular. The people had no wish to risk a repetition of the Gerry régime of plunder and proscription, while the Fed-

[12] *King*, VI, 473.

[13] The vote for governor from 1815 to 1824 was as follows:

Year	Federalist		Republican	
1815	Strong,	50,921	Dexter,	43,938
1816	Brooks,	49,578	Dearborn,	47,384
1817	"	46,160	"	38,129
1818	"	39,538	Crowninshield,	30,041
1819	"	42,875	"	35,271
1820	"	31,072	Eustis,	21,928
1821	"	28,608	"	20,268
1822	"	28,487	"	21,177
1823	Otis,	30,171	"	34,402
1824	Lathrop	34,210	"	38,650

The figures from 1815 to 1819 include Maine. In Massachusetts proper the Democrats carried each year the four counties, Middlesex, Norfolk, Dukes, and Nantucket, which had been theirs since 1796, and occasionally Berkshire, Barnstable and Plymouth. The majority in the legislature also, was Federalist until 1823.

eral party gave them the honest, stable government that they desired. But in 1823, Governor Brooks, who had reached his seventy-first year, refused to run again. Otis, although he had once rejected the nomination, had claims on the Federal party for long and distinguished service, and, when he now intimated a desire to succeed Governor Brooks,[14] he found his friends willing to meet his wishes, and offer him the nomination. A veteran politician like Otis should have seen that failure to carry his home town meant certain failure to carry the state; but, allowing his desire for vindication to override his common sense, he accepted the proposal. The opposition then prepared to make a mighty effort to get into power. Since the experience of the last quarter-century showed that the people of Massachusetts, when they elected a governor, generally reëlected him for several years, Otis's success would probably begin another series of Federalist victories. The Democratic nominee was Dr. William Eustis, a veteran of the Revolution, Secretary of War under Madison, and Minister to Holland after the peace. He was the strongest candidate they could have chosen, although already in his seventieth year and thrice defeated by Brooks.

Otis proved to be a most vulnerable candidate. He was wealthy, at a time when Massachusetts was already sufficiently democratic to look on that fact as disqualification for office; he had voted for Burr in 1801; he was a proprietor of the Charles River Bridge; he had argued against free primary schools.[15] The Boston *Statesman* appealed to the orthodox clergy for influence and votes on the ground that Otis was a Unitarian, "addicted to habit-

[14] To William Sullivan, January 12 and 19, 1822, N.Y. Pub. Library.

[15] This charge was true; Otis was retained by the selectmen and the school committee of Boston in 1818 to oppose a movement for establishing public primary schools. Winsor, *Boston*, IV, 244.

ual profane swearing," and because he was "one of the corporation of Harvard University, which is well known to be devoted to the propagation of a particular creed, and to have exerted an undue and highly prejudicial influence to depress other literary institutions, and other denominations of Christians." [16] He had invited John Henry, the British spy, so it was reported, to dine at his house. He had voted on both sides of the Missouri question, and his vote against the Tariff Bill of 1820 showed that he was no friend to domestic manufacture. And most heinous of all, he was a leader of the treasonable Hartford Convention!

Who was at *Hartford?*
I, says SIR HARRY
At Hartford did tarry,
And I was at Hartford.

Whom met you at Hartford?
Three and twenty *wise men*
Separation devising,
These met I at Hartford.

And honest men frown whenever they mention
The names of Sir Harry and the Hartford Convention! [17]

The term Hartford Convention had no such terrors for the people of Massachusetts as it had for the rest of the Union. They knew its history too well to believe the absurd charges brought up against it, and they had kept the party responsible for it in power for eight years. But they were unwilling to vote for a candidate simply to vindicate it. This was what the Federalists requested of them in 1823. The *Centinel* opened the campaign, on February 19, with a series of questions and answers on the Hartford Convention; the Federalist Central Com-

[16] *Statesman*, March 6, 24, 27, 1823.
[17] Election doggerel in the *Patriot*, March 25, 1823.

mittee issued a pamphlet justifying it;[18] and the Federalist press overflowed with apologetic literature.

Too late it was attempted to shift the issue. Otis wished to publish a statement that he had not opposed government loans during the war, but his friends dissuaded him on the ground that such an admission would lose more old-line Federalist votes than it would gain from other sources.[19] However, ex-Governor Gerry's unfortunate administrations were submitted to their annual dissection. Otis's patriotism during the French danger of 1798, his firm stand against sectional oppression from 1807 to 1814, his advocacy of the Massachusetts claims, were all set forth. To the criticism of Otis's religion, the Federalist press replied that Dr. Eustis's religious tenets "were of that questionable shape as to claim for him an alliance with those of Jefferson";[20] and to offset Hartford Convention treason, there was an attempt to brand Eustis with the authorship of the Newburgh Addresses.

None of these arguments could overcome the onus of the Hartford Convention. Otis polled almost 2000 more votes than Brooks the year before; but Eustis, with a 50 per cent increase in his vote over that of 1822, easily secured the election. He carried not only every county that had ever gone Democratic, but even hide-bound Essex and Hampden, which thereby repudiated Federalism for the first time since the original division of parties. Otis's humiliation was complete.

With the defeat of Otis, the Federal party lost its last state, and entered into a period of final dissolution. Governor Eustis, profiting by Gerry's experience, avoided

[18] Theodore Lyman, Jr.'s, *Short Account*.
[19] See John Lowell's letters at end of this chapter, and chap. XXI.
[20] *Gazette*, March 27.

a general proscription of officeholders, but he greatly offended the Federalists by a scathing denunciation of their war policy in his inaugural address. "These measures and this course had cast a reproach on the good name of the State," remarked the Governor, "which is now disavowed and removed. Massachusetts is at length restored to the American family. Her character is redeemed in the estimation of the patriots of our own country, and of every statesman in Europe." [21]

Otis wisely refused a re-nomination in 1824, but during the campaign he published in the *Centinel*, and later in pamphlet form, his most formidable contribution to controversial literature, fifteen "Letters in Defence of the Hartford Convention and of the People of Massachusetts." The first few letters consisted mostly of such sarcastic comments on Governor Eustis's address as these:

> In that speech, His Excellency appears in the novel character of a public accuser of the State and People over which he is called to preside, and requites them for the honor of their suffrages by bearing record to the past infamy of their political character and conduct. . . . In short, His Excellency, by throwing into one dark group the deformities of the factious monster, has presented to the world the picture of a degenerate State, resembling the decayed and rotten republics of which we read, in the last periods of their decline. It is true, however, that with the pretentions of a skilful painter, he aims to relieve the *obscuro* by the *claro*, and exclaims (in substance) in a sort of gubernatorial ecstacy,
>
> "What though your sins were many and were great,
> What though they shook the basis of the State,"
>
> Yet now you have made me Governor, your sins which were of scarlet, are made as white as snow, and you are readmitted to the "American family." *Jam nova progenies cœlo demittitur alto!* [22]

[21] *Patriot*, June 5, 1823.

[22] *Otis' Letters*, 1, 6.

Except for a few *jeux d'esprits* of this sort, "Otis' Letters" were rambling and turgid in style, and inconsistent in substance. Many of his friends regretted the publication, which certainly added nothing to the history of the Hartford Convention. In several instances, as we have already seen, the author's main premises cannot stand in the light of available facts.

It is most interesting to trace the gradual blending of Massachusetts Federalism with the conservative wing of the old Jeffersonian party. In the famous four-cornered contest of 1824 between Adams, Clay, Crawford, and Jackson, for the mantle of Washington and Monroe, New England without distinction of party supported Adams. A few old leaders of the Essex Junto, like Timothy Pickering, who could not forgive Adams for his sin of apostasy from Federalism, united with radical Democrats in supporting an "unpledged electoral ticket," [23] that would probably have voted for Crawford if chosen. The Adams ticket, however, carried Massachusetts by an overwhelming majority. In state elections, there was no Federalist candidate for governor after 1824. The Federalist legislative caucus endorsed the Republican candidate in 1825 and 1826, but in the latter year a portion of the dying party, refusing to submit, actually had the spirit to call a convention at Boston and nominate Samuel Hubbard, who carried only Hampshire County. Chaos reigned in the elections for State Senators and Representatives; over eight hundred persons received votes for

[23] This ticket was nominated piecemeal by opponents of Adams, without distinction of party, in congressional districts (*Centinel*, October 20, 1824; cf. McMaster, *United States*, v, 66). A number of its members were Federalists. A Federalist caucus in Boston could not agree on which ticket to support nor could the *Centinel* (October 16). Daniel Webster wrote Jeremiah Mason, May 9, 1824: "I have not seen how Federalists could possibly join with those who support Mr. C. The company he keeps at the North is my strongest objection to him." *Works* (National ed.), XVI, 85.

the "Boston Seat" in 1826.[24] Separate Federalist tickets were nominated in 1825, 1826, and 1827, — Otis was on that of 1827, — but a "union ticket," composed half of Federalists, half of Adams Republicans, invariably won.

During the summer of 1827 the Federal party delivered its swan-song. Since Daniel Webster had been promoted from the House to the Senate, it was necessary to hold a by-election to choose a successor. A Federalist caucus was accordingly summoned, to which the Central Committee presented the name of Benjamin Gorham, with the expectation that his nomination would ensue in the usual cut-and-dried fashion. Greatly to their surprise, however, an unknown young man mounted a bench and harangued the caucus in favor of Harrison Gray Otis. Although he broke down in the midst of his speech, and had to read the remainder from a manuscript hitherto concealed in his hat, this obscure champion developed so strong a sentiment for Otis that the caucus was adjourned until the veteran politician could be consulted. The name of this bold youth was William Lloyd Garrison. Although but twenty-two years of age, and a humble journeyman printer, he had long been an ardent admirer of Otis, and had published a glowing panegyric of him when a candidate for governor. But young Garrison's efforts on this occasion were in vain, for Otis refused absolutely to reënter the political arena. Benjamin Gorham, who was finally nominated by the adjourned Federalist caucus, defeated the Adams and Jackson candidates for Congress.[25] This was the last occasion on which the Boston Federalists acted together under their old banner.

Otis's political retirement was unwillingly broken by the

[24] *Centinel*, May 13, 1826.

[25] *Life of William Lloyd Garrison, by his Children*, I, 47, 73–77; Boston *Courier*, July 11–23, 1827.

presidential election of 1828. The Federalists played in this contest the unhappy rôle of scapegoats, the ownership of which each side attempted to force upon the other. The Boston *Statesman*, a typical blackguarding Jackson sheet, supported by the hungry office-seeking element in the Democratic party, attempted to prove that John Quincy Adams was a Hartford Convention Federalist in disguise, and that his candidacy was a Federalist plot to revive the "reign of terror" of the elder Adams. During the month before election day its pages became fairly spotted with "Hartford Convention" in italics and capitals. At the same time the *Statesman* had for its only ally in the Boston press the *Jackson Republican*, which was founded and edited by Theodore Lyman, Jr., a great-nephew of Timothy Pickering, and author of the *Short Account of the Hartford Convention*. The clientèle of this sheet came almost exclusively from that class of old Federalists, with whom John Quincy Adams's defection in 1808 overshadowed any of the live issues of the campaign. It is needless to say that in its pages all references to the Hartford Convention were carefully avoided. The conservative Adams press in Boston, remembering its past, was also tender of old Federalist issues until a week before the election, when the President forced its hand. On October 29 he published in the *National Intelligencer*, in reply to certain imputations against his motives for deserting Federalism, that in 1808 the object of the Massachusetts Federalist leaders "was, and had been for several years a dissolution of the Union, and the establishment of a separate confederation."[26] Boston was still gasping for breath over this startling announcement when it learned that Daniel Webster, one of Adams's most eminent supporters, was about to bring a libel suit against

[26] *N. E. Federalism*, 25.

Theodore Lyman for casually mentioning him in the *Jackson Republican* as one of the former Federalist leaders whom the President intended to impugn.[27]

A more complicated political situation it would be difficult to imagine. One Jackson paper was accusing Adams of Federalism; Adams was charging the Federalists with treason, and an Adams Federalist was suing a Jackson Federalist for implying that he was among the traitors. As a protest, a number of "Federal young men," who had been supporting Adams, nominated a Federalist ticket of presidential electors, having at the head Otis and William Prescott, and including three other members of the Hartford Convention.[28] It received the pitiful total of 156 votes in Boston, and none, apparently, in the rest of the state. In spite of his tactless charge, Adams swept the city and state as cleanly as in 1824; but Andrew Jackson was elected President by a majority of 95 electoral votes.

The Federal party, then, ceased to exist as a state organization in 1825, and as a local organization in Boston in 1827; in the rest of the Union it was already extinct. The eleventh hour list of presidential electors in 1828, headed by Otis, was, so far as I know, the last ticket ever voted for that bore the name of the once powerful party of Washington and Hamilton.[29]

Even before Adams was eliminated from the political stage, the mass of Federalists had already followed their conservative instincts, and joined the National Republi-

[27] J. H. Benton, Jr., *A Notable Libel Case* (Boston, 1904).

[28] Boston *Courier*, October 31, 1828.

[29] Among the Otis papers for 1843 is a broadside signed by Robert Anderson, of James City, Virginia, nominating himself for Congress, and Otis (then aged 78) and Louis McLean for the presidency and vice-presidency, on a platform composed of the old Federalist principles of 1798! This was undoubtedly the work of an isolated crank, which does not indicate a late survival of the Federal party.

can, later the Whig party, which was regularly attacked by the Democrats, as in 1828, for including "Hartford Convention Federalists" among its members.[30] But for many years Federalism survived its party existence as a social cult. Ancient Federalist leaders and their descendants long occupied a position in New England corresponding to that of good Confederate families in the South of to-day.

The charge of disunion, made by Adams at the eleventh hour against the leaders of Massachusetts Federalism, left a heritage of bad feeling in Boston after the election of 1828. It started a controversy, in which Otis bore a prominent part, and brought forth charges and countercharges to which we have frequently referred for the history of the period 1804–1814. Mr. Henry Adams has published them in full in his *Documents Relating to New-England Federalism*. Otis and twelve other Federalists[31] answered the President by a short public letter, calling for facts and names to support his accusation. He replied evasively in January, 1829, after which Otis and his supporters published an "Appeal to the people of Massachusetts" disavowing all knowledge of, or connection with, a plot to dissolve the Union, and once more defending the Hartford Convention. The ex-President, smarting under his undeserved defeat at the polls, ascribed this counterblast to the personal spite of Otis, and to a supposed desire to humiliate the ancient enemy of Boston Federalism. He prepared a lengthy "Reply to the Appeal," directed mainly against Otis and the Hartford

[30] A Boston pamphlet of 1840, *The Identity of the Hartford Convention Federalists with the Modern Whig, Harrison Party*, demonstrates that all surviving Federalist leaders of 1814, with very few exceptions, were Whigs in 1840.

[31] Israel Thorndike, Thomas Handasyd Perkins, William Prescott, Daniel Sargent, John Lowell, William Sullivan, Charles Jackson, Warren Dutton, Benjamin Pickman, Henry Cabot (son of George Cabot), C. C. Parsons (son of Theophilus Parsons), and Franklin Dexter (son of Samuel Dexter).

Convention, and filled with the most unjust and bitter aspersions on his character and motives. But by the time that the paper was completed, the author, advised by his friends that its language was too personal and bitter to create a good impression, decided to suppress it; "and it was not long before the patriotic course of Mr. Otis, at the time of the nullification excitement, led Mr. Adams to rejoice at the suppression." [32] This course was wise, for the document, though conclusive as to the existence of a disunion plot in 1804, and an able presentation of the conspiracy theory of the Hartford Convention, fails to bring forward a single fact sufficient to justify an impartial historian in accepting that theory as correct. The "Reply," moreover, is so hopelessly discursive — more than three times as long as "Otis' Letters" — that few would have read it. Although Otis's leadership on the Federalist side of the controversy is evident, his motive was not personal spite. Whatever his opinion of Adams was after the controversy began,[33] he previously had entertained the most kindly feelings towards him, and had intended to vote for him;[34] and his challenge to produce the boasted "unequivocal evidence" of a disunion conspiracy was due to a desire once and for all to refute this familiar charge, never before made upon such high authority.

Otis was much elated over having the last word in this controversy, and over a vindication by his fellow-citizens, as he deemed it, by being elected the third mayor of Boston. He was far, however, from being the first choice for that position. Josiah Quincy, the mayor since 1824, had aroused much opposition by his sweeping reforms, and

[32] Henry Adams's preface to *N. E. Federalism.*

[33] See his pungent letter to Judge Hopkinson at the end of this chapter.

[34] So he wrote Martin Van Buren in 1829.

was opposed for reëlection, in December, 1828, by two other candidates. As in the first municipal election of 1822, no candidate secured a majority at the first trial. In the mean time a movement had commenced to bring Otis forth from his retirement. A letter appeared in the Boston *Courier* of December 8, professing to be from a Jeffersonian Democrat who wished to see Otis's talents utilized by the city. It deplored the fact that the Federal party had discarded him after his defeat in 1823. "I like the honesty of this man," announced the writer. "I admire his consistency and genius. . . . Otis in his latter, as well as in his earlier days, is destined to prove an honor and an ornament to the city of his birth." After the first trial Otis declined a nomination, on the ground of ill-health, but when a second balloting failed to break the deadlock, he yielded, and accepted a nomination from a non-partisan caucus. Notwithstanding a reminder in the election day *Patriot* (December 22, 1828) that "fourteen years ago last Monday, the memorable Hartford Convention met," Otis was elected by a fair majority. This event marks the restoration of his former popularity, and the beginning of the last epoch of his life, when occasional public employment and frequent participation in public questions relieved a life of dignified retirement.

LETTERS

THOMAS HANDASYD PERKINS TO OTIS

Boston April 5, 1822

My dear friend

You will probably have been advised from your son of the course which things have taken here. Quincy has thrown himself into the hands of the "Midling or Medling Interest" and has suffered himself to be put up as the Mayor. I had decided upon the course it was incumbent on me to pursue and went to

the caucus, with the intention of making the declaration which I was bound to do under your instructions, that is, not to suffer your name to be put upon the list of Candidates against *any one of the federal party who might be started for the Mayoralty.* This was however done, in a manner highly creditable to him, by your son — he stated the desire you had to be placed on the list, to depend intirely upon your having the united voice of your political friends; your disinclination to be in the way of any one whom the party might think proper to support, and his wish that your name might be stricken from the list &c &c, — his speech on the occasion was what you would have been satisfied with; it was dignified, and respectful at the same time.

Your friends decided that if upon the canvass you had a majority of voices you must be supported by the party. You had the majority, and you will be voted for on Monday. Harry having made the declaration in your behalf it leaves you at perfect liberty to withdraw yourself if you think proper, if elected — but which I hope will not be the case. Quincy has done himself up, by the course he has pursued. If he gets the Mayoralty, his own friends will not suffer him to hold his place on the Bench, with which he has expressed himself as being particularly well pleased.

As I gave him my mind very freely on the subject, we are of course at Swords points — he met me yesterday on the street, and gave me a formal bow, and a stately "good morning" — he will have the high gratification of having split up the federal party, and if he succeeds in his object will lose the place to which he has pretended so much devotion. Wm Sturgis has been his great "slang wanger," and carries with him the "ten footers," [35] and a portion of the Democracy which is always the most opposed to the most conspicuous of the federal party. — Webster, Lowell, Tudor, all the Judges and those whom I know you to feel a high respect for, are ardent in the expression of the wish that your name should not be taken from the list; and it will therefore be left on, and whether you gain the race or not, is to be determined — turn as it may, there is no doubt that Quincy loses, tho he may gain majority. Knowing that there are many Gentlemen who will vote for you, even should your friends think proper to desire your name to be stricken out, we think it best

[35] The "Middling Interest."

that the thing should take its course. I have consulted many Gentlemen on the occasion and there seems to be but one opinion — at any rate it leaves you at full liberty to act as you may think proper, should you have the majority. But for this most improper conduct of Quincy, the Election of the Mayor would have been unanimous.

JOHN LOWELL TO OTIS

[Feb. 26, 1823.]

Dear Sir,

One remark I intended to have made in my note of yesterday.[36] Your election is, I apprehend, less in hazard from the desertion of the milk & water Federalists, than from the want of thoro' cordiality among a higher & better class, & it is *on this* ground that you must account for my past & future opinion & conduct in this election.

It is not, be persuaded, that I place the least reliance on the honor or the good faith of the first named class. God knows, they have perfidiously deserted us 20 times in the 30 years past.

I will explain myself. When they can, by joining with ye Democrats mortify us, & carry a man offensive to us, they do it most shamelessly. Thus, (besides ye memorable treachery of March last,) when a Federal caucus of ye two branches at my house had unanimously agreed to vote for Pickering as Senator, your Welles's office Gentlemen agreed to join with the democrats to bring in J Q Adams. I then openly charged them with the perfidy, & they could not deny it. I need not say any thing of Mason's last election, nor of the defeat of Ritchie's. Next to the pleasure of beating the democrats, their greatest is to mortify those whose talents they fear, & whose political probity is an everlasting reproach to themselves. Still we must bear & forbear.

But we have *one* hold of them in *this* Election which appears to me too strong for them to break. *They* know, that on ye *power* of the *party* their very existence as publick men depends. What would Q & P & all the P's & Q's become, if Democracy gets as well seated in the saddle as Genl. Root is in N York? They will never again be heard of. They will eat no more Corporation dinners, nor be regaled any longer with the odoriferous

[36] This is among the letters following chap. xxi.

praises upon which they have subsisted heretofore. The higher class on the other hand depend more on their reputation for talents — on the consciousness of *sincere publick respect* & will be much more likely therefore to act whimsically in this election. Not that I think it probable they will do so. Far from it. But the *washy* Federalists *must* act with us *unless* a *third* Candidate shall be run, & they shall have hopes to put him in & preserve *their own power*. The few remarks which I shall make between this period & the election will be influenced by *this* view of the state of things. It will be my object to alarm every *little holder of office* for his darling possession. The wiser men know the nature of Democracy too well to put any thing at hazard. You can now better understand the scope of my remarks yesterday. I think the "oi Polloi" must follow us, because they have *no one else* to follow, but I dread any measures which may disgust certain very good & high minded men who have not been always so just & generous & manly towards you, as I think they ought to have been. You must confess, that there are very few, who would take the freedom to speak so plainly, but I do it, because I have nothing in my breast on this subject which I wish to conceal. I most anxiously desire your success on every ground personal & publick.

Yours with great respect & regard

J. Lowell

OTIS TO JUDGE JOSEPH HOPKINSON

From the Hopkinson Manuscripts

Boston 5 March, 1829.

My dear Sir —

* * * * * * * * * * *

Considering that plots and conspiracies are part of the machinery in all countries in a state of war, and regarding the history of false plots in other nations; the greediness with which they are gobbled down by the Turkey-buzzards; the impressions they make on the timid and jealous, & the interests & passions which become involved in giving countenance to their existence, I think our plot has had better than neighbours fare, thus far. All intelligent persons who have attended to the sub-

ject are I believe convinced, and the goodly fellowship of those who take calumny on trust, is I suspect somewhat shaken. It would die away, probably in my time, but for the conduct of Yankees with Mr Adams at their head. These men reserve the application which was made by Vergniaud of the fable of Saturn to the French revolution. They devour their own parent. The Telegraph is managed by a Yankee — and thus the cue is taken in other Southern papers. But let that pass. I congratulate you with all my heart that the intrigues of the "prison-house" have not defeated your appointment to office — I am told it is agreeable to you, and sure I am it is rightly deserved & will be serviceable to your profession and Country. A pretty figure is made by Govr. Plumer. Did ever a sea-sick Codfisher on the Banks of Newfoundland, disgorge so much flattery upon so unworthy an object as J. Q. A. has upon him.[37] There is a case of one states evidence, supporting the character of another. It so happens that among us *Appelants*, there is not a man who has any acquaintance with Plumer, and but one that would know him by sight from the Devil. If you look at the Senators & Representatives in 1803 from Massts. you will find that Pickering & Adams were Senators — *Eustis* rep: from Boston, and taking out the democrats from Mass. in the H of R, the others though quite respectable individuals, were never reckoned among the active leaders. It is mere rigmarole. This fellow Plumer used to take notes at dinner with the Federalists; while he dipped his hand in the sop [sic]. And I dare say has g[ot down some] of their convivial anathemas, as well as jocularities in his black book. It is amusing to think how Apostates smell each other out. This Adams & Plumer are antipodes in talent character, learning, and experience of public affairs, yet though born with their feet opposite, they come cheek by jowl by the attraction of Apostasy. First & Last, you will hear a great deal more from Adams. He is on a bed of thorns and cant be quiet. Respectfully and with great regard

Yr

H. G. Otis

[37] Otis here alludes to William Plumer's published letter of December 20, 1828, to John Quincy Adams, supporting the latter's statements regarding the existence of a disunion plot in 1804. Plumer deserted the Federal party at the same time as Adams.

CHAPTER XXXII

ABOLITION, AND A CONSERVATIVE SOLUTION

1829–1839, ÆT. 64–74

During the six years between Otis's retirement from the Senate and his election to the mayoralty of Boston, the country was given a rest from slavery agitation. The anti-slavery movement of 1819–21 was, as we have seen, essentially political, and died down as soon as the Missouri question was considered settled. But in the mean time the ground was being prepared for a new sort of slavery contest, concerning the right and wrong of the institution.

During the effervescent decade of the eighteen-twenties, liberal and humanitarian movements were organized throughout the civilized world. Society was becoming at once impatient of ancient customs and restraints — as the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828, and the numerous European revolutions of 1830 witnessed — and interested in the weak and unfortunate classes, such as paupers, poor debtors, the blind and insane, and the negro slave. England was working toward the abolition of slavery in the British possessions, and the United States lacked only new leaders and new methods to revive a moral revulsion against the existence of slavery on American soil. Unfortunately for the peace of mind of Harrison Gray Otis, it was during his incumbency as mayor of Boston that a new abolitionist apostle appeared, and commenced a radically new propaganda in that city.

During Otis's first term as mayor, in September, 1829,

a colored old-clothes dealer of Boston, named David Walker, published an inflammatory pamphlet, called *Walker's Appeal*, addressed to the members of his race, which exhorted them to gain their freedom by force. Walker believed that he had a divine commission to write, and seems to have been a dusky John the Baptist prefiguring Garrisonian abolition.[1] Somehow he managed to circulate his pamphlet in the South, where it naturally aroused the liveliest resentment among the whites. In December, 1829, the mayor of Savannah wrote Otis calling his attention to the publication, and requesting its suppression. Otis replied that he regarded the pamphlet "with deep disapprobation and abhorrence," and that no disposition was lacking on the part of the city authorities "to avail themselves of any lawful means for preventing this attempt to throw firebrands" into the South, but that Walker had violated no law of Massachusetts, and could not therefore be punished or silenced. Another copy of the *Appeal*, which got into the hands of the Virginia authorities, was made the subject of a special message from Governor Giles to the legislature. Otis, in sending him a copy of his reply to the mayor of Savannah, wrote:

> You may be assured that your good people cannot hold in more absolute detestation the sentiments of the writer than do the people of this city, and, as I verily believe, the mass of the New England population. The only difference is, that the insignificance of the writer, the extravagance of his sanguinary fanaticism tending to disgust all persons of common humanity with his object, and the very partial circulation of this book, prevent the affair from being a subject of excitement and hardly of serious attention.[2]

[1] *Life of W. L. Garrison, told by his Children*, I, 159–61.

[2] This correspondence is printed in G. W. Williams, *History of the Negro Race*, II, 553. Governor Gilmer, of Georgia, requested Otis by letter (March 23,

Walker therefore escaped scot free, and was able to publish with impunity new editions of his *Appeal*. Although this negro apostle died in the following year, 1830, his place in Boston was soon more than filled by William Lloyd Garrison, the young journeyman printer who had supported Otis enthusiastically in 1823 and 1827. Garrison, in spite of his admiration for a conservative like Otis, was a typical radical with a roving commission to reform the world. Since his interference in Federalist politics in 1827, he had been assailing such social evils as intemperance, infidelity, desecration of the Sabbath, and woman's subjection to man. Benjamin Lundy, a pioneer abolitionist editor, finally convinced him that negro slavery was the greatest field for his reforming talents, and invited him to collaborate in editing an abolitionist sheet in Baltimore. There Garrison served a term in jail for interfering with the domestic slave trade, and emerged with the purpose of founding a new abolitionist journal of his own. On January 1, 1831, the first number of his *Liberator* was published in Boston, on borrowed paper, with type set by the editor's own hand, and with a preliminary subscription list that he could count on his fingers. On the first page he announced:

> I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population. . . . On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. . . . I am in earnest — I will not equivocate — I will not excuse — I will not retreat a single inch — AND I WILL BE HEARD.

Had Garrison aimed to arouse the most violent indignation in the South against himself and his journal, he

1830), to make an inquisition of Walker's effects in order to obtain for the Georgia authorities his correspondence with a certain Burrit accused of circulating the *Appeal* in that state. Otis refused rather peremptorily to execute this commission.

could have chosen no better time than the year 1831 to commence the enterprise. In August occurred at Southampton, Virginia, the serious "Nat Turner" slave insurrection, which was only put down after sixty white people had been murdered. It was only natural that the Southern people, as soon as they heard of the *Liberator*, should attribute the insurrection to its influence. In September a small North Carolina newspaper [3] printed a letter from a "gentleman at Washington," stating that a journal called the *Liberator*, founded "with the avowed purpose of inciting rebellion in the South," was being circulated among free negroes and slaves, by secret agents disguised as Yankee peddlers. This item was so widely copied in the Southern press that the influential *National Intelligencer*, early in October, inquired of "the worthy mayor of the City of Boston, whether no law can be found to prevent the publication, within the city over which he presides, of such diabolical papers as we have seen a sample of here in the hands of slaves, and of which there are many in circulation to the South of us?" [4] At the same time Otis began to receive personal letters on the subject from prominent Southerners. None of them was so calculated to excite his sensibility as the following appeal from Mrs. Lawrence Lewis, the once beautiful "Nelly" Custis, granddaughter of Martha Washington and niece of General Washington:

Alex[andri]a Oct 17th 1831

Dear Sir,

I hope you will pardon my appeal to you, in consideration of our long acquaintance, & of the momentous & vital interests of which I am about to treat. The dreadful events of Augst last in our State, the want of confidence & insecurity produced

[3] The *Tarborough Free Press*. Cf. Senator Hayne's letter to Otis, below.
[4] Cited in the *Liberator*, October 8, 1831.

by those horrors, *compel* me to address you. To a wretch outraging the Laws of God & Man, to the Editor of the "Liberator" — one of your community, — protected by your Laws, we owe in *greatest measure* this calamity. His paper is widely circulated even in this Town. Think you not that the blood of the innocent, the helpless, will be required of those who suffer such inflammatory publications to issue from their community, without the slightest check of *fine* or imprisonment. I think he merits *Death* — you would pronounce sentence of Death, on an Incendiary who would fire your City, throw a match into your powder magazine. Is not the Editor of the Liberator an incendiary of the very worst description — He inculcates insurrection, murder, cruelty, & baseness, in every shape. The most *lenient* are as frequently the victims, as the most rigorous, & even *more* frequently; since *nine* times out of *ten*, a negro loves those best who are *least* indulgent — *fear* not *principle* governing the *far far* greater part. Our whites unhappily evince *too much fear* of these wretches — they can *never* succeed in subjugating the Whites, but our young & lovely females, infant innocence, & helpless age will be their victims — it is like a smothered volcano — we know not when, or where, the flame will burst forth, but we know that death in the most horrid forms threatens us. Some have died, others have become deranged from apprehension, since the South Hampton affair. Can you reflect on the instrument employed for our destruction — that we may trace the *train* as far as *Boston*, & not use your efforts to arrest its course, to make an example of the Author of evil. Your Southern Brethren incurred this curse by no act of their own, they are endeavouring by degrees, & consistently with their safety, & even existence, to remove it. Suffer them to do what they know to be best, & let [not] their Eastern, & Northern Brethren from a false principle of Philanthropy, make the blacks miserable, discontented, & rebellious, & force the whites to *exterminate* them. I have been assured by several Gentlemen who have visited the devoted district, that should the blacks attempt to rise there again, they will be exterminated; the excitement is so great. We cannot leave our State, our only means of subsistence is here, we cannot dispose of our property to any advantage. We must therefore risk the horrors that may be impending. I have never *appeared* to *fear* them, & I *will not*,

but I cannot feel secure or happy now, I confess. My darling children & grandchildren are dearer to me than life. Mr & Mrs Butler, & their lovely son, will go to Louisiana the 1st Novr., I expect & *fear*. My son & his family reside in Fredk. County where I shall go with Angela the last of Novr, for two months, after which we shall reside again at Woodlawn.[5] My family unite with me in respectful regards to yourself & family & to our other tried Boston friends. . . .

Respectfully your friend

E P Lewis.

Otis also received letters in the same vein from Benjamin Faneuil Hunt, an eminent lawyer of Charleston, and from Senator Hayne, of South Carolina, Webster's antagonist in the celebrated debate of 1830.[6] Mr. Hunt complained against not only the *Liberator*, but also certain printed calico handkerchiefs, "exhibiting Negroes under circumstances calculated to elicit sympathy," said to have been sent from Massachusetts. He hinted that if Boston were the source of this merchandise, commercial intercourse between it and South Carolina would be cut off. Senator Hayne inclosed a copy of Number 38 of the *Liberator*, which had been sent to him gratis. Although Garrison always disclaimed any intent of inciting slave insurrection, and denied any connection with the Southampton massacre, yet in this very Number 38, the events of the late rising are related in so truculent a manner as fairly to justify the Southern suspicions of his motives.

Otis was as powerless to suppress Garrison and the *Liberator* as he had been to act in the case of *Walker's Appeal*. The notice in the *National Intelligencer* was the first intimation he had of the *Liberator's* existence. To quote his own words:[7]

[5] The Lewis estate, near Alexandria. [6] See end of this chapter.

[7] I quote here from Otis's "Letter to the People of Massachusetts," in the Boston *Atlas*, October 2, 1848.

Some time afterward, it was reported to me, by the city officers, that they had ferreted out the paper and its editor; that his office was an obscure hole, his only visible auxiliary a negro boy, and his supporters a few very insignificant persons of all colors. This information, with the consent of the aldermen, I communicated to the above-named governors,[8] with an assurance of my belief that the new fanaticism had not made, nor was likely to make, proselytes among the respectable classes of our people. In this, however, I was mistaken.

It was this passage that inspired Lowell's famous poem to William Lloyd Garrison, beginning,

> "In a small chamber, friendless and unseen,
> Toiled o'er his types one poor, unlearned young man;
> The place was dark, unfurnitured, and mean; —
> Yet there the freedom of a race began."

There is, indeed, food for thought and sarcasm in the contrast between the half-contemptuous, half-indignant tone in which Harrison Gray Otis described his first knowledge of the young agitator's existence, and the magnitude of the cause to which that "obscure hole," the office of the *Liberator*, gave birth.

In his reply to Mr. Hunt, dated October 17, 1831,[9] Otis made a frank and detailed statement of his attitude toward Garrisonian abolition. He assured him that the *Liberator* enjoyed only "insignificant countenance and support"; that although he, and the people of Boston generally, entertained the same solicitude for eventual emancipation as frequently had been expressed by "the best citizens of your own and other plantation states, yet there has been displayed among us, less disposition to interfere with the actual relations of master and slave in

[8] Otis has here confused the Garrison and the Walker affairs. It was on the latter case that Otis was applied to by the governors of Virginia and Georgia.

[9] Printed in Niles, XLV, 42.

our sister states, than has been manifested in other places." [10]

For my own part [he continues] I never doubted that the states of this union are inhibited by the federal compact from interfering with the plantation states in the management of their own slaves. The letter and the spirit of the constitution are opposed to it. . . . It is the part of wisdom as well as duty, for us to abstain from tampering with this dangerous case. I am desirous of leaving the affair of emancipation of your slaves to yourselves, to time, to the Providence of God. Whatever measures can be wrought by benevolent and well principled associations, by such temperate appeals to reason and to the principles of humanity as are consistent with the peace and safety, and rights . . . of our southern brethren, in favor of the gradual abolition of slavery, to them I say, God speed. But I protest with deep horror against all measures of whatever description, tending to endanger their lives or make miserable the tenure of their existence.

Otis made a wise answer likewise to Hunt's request for penal laws against incendiary writings. He promised to apply any reasonable suggestion of Southern statesmen for curbing abolition by public opinion; but, he remarked, Mr. Hunt "must perceive the intrinsic if not insuperable obstacles to legislative enactments, made to prevent crimes from being consummated beyond the local jurisdiction." Such interference would drive every moderate person of anti-slavery leanings, and many previously indifferent to the subject, to make common cause with the fanatics, "and justify themselves with the prejudices and arguments that abound against sedition acts."

[10] This statement was quite true. Of the hundred-odd abolition societies in the United States in 1830, New England possessed not one. Garrison wrote in the first number of the *Liberator*, that he found "contempt more bitter, opposition more active, detraction more relentless, prejudice more stubborn, and apathy more frozen," in New England "than among slave owners themselves."

Otis had learned long ago, from the disastrous result of the Sedition Act in 1798, that in a country like the United States any attempt to defend a system by the suppression of free discussion and criticism was certain to result in the system's overthrow. Unfortunately for the South, the past experience of its leaders had not taught them this lesson. Their subsequent struggle to stifle criticism of slavery in Congress, in the press, and among the people generally, simply convinced the average Northern citizen that this institution which could not bear the light of day must be inherently rotten.

Otis must have spent much time and thought on this momentous slavery question in the year 1831. The idea of an irrepressible conflict had probably occurred to him, as it did to men like Jefferson and Adams, during the Missouri debates of 1820; and the essential and irreconcilable contradiction between the ideas of his Southern correspondents and those of Garrison, evidently brought him to some such conclusion as Lincoln's, that the Union could not endure "half slave and half free." To Otis there seemed to be but one way out: a comprehensive policy of gradual emancipation and colonization of the slaves by the federal government, with the consent of the slaveholder. The time was ripe, if it ever was, for such a project. The Southampton insurrection, which shook slavery to its foundations, made every thinking slaveholder, in Virginia at least, willing to listen to temperate appeals for emancipation; and Garrisonian abolition was not yet sufficiently powerful to be a serious obstacle.

Otis described his project in a long letter of February 5, 1832, to Nathan Appleton, the Boston representative in Congress,[11] and in an essay that appeared in the Boston *Courier* for February 16, over the pseudonym of "Sug-

[11] Printed at the end of this chapter.

gestor." The article begins with the statement that the abolition of slavery is the most important question before the people of the United States. It continues:

Yet such is the natural and feverish sensibility upon this subject among the proprietors of slaves, that hitherto they have protested with indignant remonstrance against all approach to it by others. They feel correctly that their property in their slaves is recognized by the Constitution. They notice with pardonable apprehension the ravings of the fanatics and the indiscretions of the zealots, as the call of crusaders stimulating their slaves to deeds of death. Unable to determine between projects of emancipation originating with those who feel with them and for them, and those infatuated persons who are ripe for abolition by any means and at all hazards, they have concluded that their security could be found only in repelling all interference with what they consider their peculiar rights.

[Should this attitude be maintained, all reform would be hopeless; but] a new era has commenced. The people of Virginia, at least, are no longer disposed to shut their eyes or bridle their tongues. . . . Their statesmen and orators do not affect to disguise or palliate the evils of slavery, or to deny the necessity of measures suitable to meet and remove them. Language, to which they would not have patiently listened from the lips of others, is now used by themselves, with a pathos which comes from their hearts and which must reach the hearts of all who regard them as fellow-citizens, and as a high-minded, patriotic race, who with us have shared the toils, and faced the danger, and borne the burdens, and supported the principles, which have made us a great and free nation.

[Not only is the time propitious for abolition, but] the means of effecting it are at the command of the national government. [The national revenue is so great as to] leave a competent amount to be annually appropriated to the raising of a fund which might be apportioned among the Plantation States, in the ratio of their slave population, and applied by each state, *in its own mode*, to the purchase of the slaves owned by their citizens, and to the colonization of *all* their colored people.

. . . If the abolition of slavery could by these means be effected, the public blessings that would result to this nation

transcend the power of calculation. But they may all be comprehended in one. IT WOULD FIX THE STABILITY OF THE UNION. We should become one people, with the same habits, feelings, pursuits, and interests, and should all experience a common prosperity. We should hear no more of the fearful array of conflicting interests on the different sides of Mason and Dixon's Line, and our sectional jealousies would be obliterated and forgotten. All calculation of dollars and cents, sink into contempt in comparison with the value of this magnificent object, especially when we have enough to spare for its attainment. [The member who might make this proposition would immortalize himself, and] a measure inferior only to the declaration of independence would crown with unfading glory the Congress in which it had originated.

Otis also corresponded with several members of Congress on this subject, and attempted, though in vain, to secure a place for his suggestions in the columns of the *National Intelligencer*. To Daniel Webster he wrote, on June 12, 1832:

After all my dear Sir, there will be no peace or security for us, untill you buy up the Virginia negroes & send them off — If Virginia could be whitewashed she would say with St. Paul, "now I am a man I put off chi'dish things," and pour ces autres, they could do us no harm.[12] I do believe, perhaps too fondly that a proposition to this end coming from the North, and managed with judgment and address and introduced with such a speech as I could make, (if I was somebody that I wont name); however unfavorably it might be received at first, by those whose interest it would chiefly promote would ultimately obtain, and prove to be the most feasible and felicitous of all schemes that have been or can be devised for saving this confederacy. So please to remember after I am dead, & you see this project realized after all, "Old Otis was not so raving about the matter as he appeared to be." [13]

[12] Here the old New England Federalist in Otis appears. To deprive Virginia of her colored population would shear her of one great source of political power. In the first half of the letter, Otis had been complaining of Virginian opposition to the United States Bank and the protective system.

[13] Webster MSS., Library of Congress.

For its statesmanlike insight, its originality,[14] and its grasp of the great question that shook the Union to its foundation, this scheme of Otis was indeed remarkable, and also more to his credit than anything he ever accomplished or wrote. His comprehensive project, if carried out, would have prevented the Civil War, if anything under Heaven could have averted that calamity. But there were insuperable practical difficulties in the way of its execution. The South was unwilling even to contemplate a scheme of emancipation that did not include the subsequent colonization of the freedmen, which was impossible with a negro population of three millions. It was not, as Otis said, a question of dollars and cents: the cost of the Civil War and fifty years of pensions, it has been estimated, would have paid for every slave in the United States with his weight in gold. But such a policy would have been more inhuman than slavery. An age that still sheds tears over the Acadians and the Moriscos would not have tolerated an indiscriminate pitch-forking of helpless negroes by the tens of thousands into the wilds of Africa. The really insuperable obstacle to Otis's scheme, however, was the fact that according to the dominant opinion in the lower South, slavery was considered a positive blessing, and an economic and social necessity.[15]

[14] Although it is a dangerous thing to claim originality for any project of legislation, Otis's scheme appears to have been original, at least in detail. The idea of colonization was of course old, and the American Colonization Society (of which Otis was not a member) at that time was endeavoring to secure national aid for its projects. This society was founded in 1816 to attain the object at which Otis aimed, namely, the emancipation and colonization of *all* the slaves; but it was controlled by persons who desired no more than the colonizing of free Negroes in order to protect, and not abolish, slavery.

[15] The lower South was always the most extreme pro-slavery section of the country — Rutledge's sentiments in the debates of 1797–1800 will be recalled. In 1826, Senator Hayne, Otis's correspondent, remarked in the Senate: "To attempt to instruct us on this subject, — to dare to assail our institutions, is

Another Massachusetts member of Congress with whom Otis corresponded on this subject, Henry A. S. Dearborn, wrote him hopefully on February 26, 1832:

As to slaves, the states, where they exist, are not quite ripe to act, but will be, by an other year. We say to them, you will not let us move in this all important question, without flying in a passion; now then, mature your plan, ask what sum you please, to 5 or ten millions, & we will vote for it. They are seriously alarmed, & the debate in the Virginia legislature has broken the spell which kept every man's mouth sealed. The work of emancipation & expatriation has commenced, & will go on, vigorously.

The consent of Virginia, and perhaps of some other of the border states, might possibly have been secured for Otis's project; but a debate that took place in the House of Representatives only a week after Dearborn's letter was written, showed how hopeless it was to expect the consent of the lower South. Charles Fenton Mercer, of Virginia, presented in Congress on April 2, 1832, a petition for national aid to the American Colonization Society in carrying out a plan of emancipation and colonization similar to Otis's. Only two members, one from Rhode Island and the other from Massachusetts, raised their voices in favor of reading the petition. James Blair, of South Carolina, called Mercer a "recreant to the cause" of the slave states, and added:

There has always been a disposition in this House . . . to agitate the slave question. . . . The next step will be to patronize the Colonization Society; and then, I suppose, the next will be to apply to its designs the surplus revenue — to appropriate

wantonly to invade our peace. Let me solemnly declare, once for all, that the Southern States never will permit and never can permit, any interference, whatever, in their domestic concerns, and that the very day on which the unhallowed attempt shall be made by the authorities of the federal government, we will consider ourselves as driven from the union." Niles, xxx, 171.

our own money to purchase our own property. I can tell gentlemen, that when they move this question seriously, we from the South will meet it elsewhere. It will not be disputed in this House, but in the open field, where powder and cannon will be our orators, and our arguments lead and steel.

These sentiments, which he twice repeated during the debate [16] were typical of the attitude of the lower South toward such plans as that set forth by Otis.[17]

Otis, retired as he was from political life, was in no position to put forward his own project effectually; and, since he never succeeded in interesting any of the great leaders of the period in it, he finally gave up the scheme as hopeless, and turned all his energy toward counteracting Garrisonian abolition.[18]

William Lloyd Garrison employed such methods in his crusade against slavery as to shock every conservative or moderate anti-slavery man in the North, and to exasperate the Southern slaveholder, on whose consent a peaceful solution of the question depended. He refused to sanction compensation to slave-owners because he denied that man could hold property in man. His most approved method was to hold up the slaveholders to the world's scorn as man-stealers, pirates and murderers,

[16] *Register of Debates in Congress*, 22d Cong., 1st Sess., 2332–50.

[17] In 1849 Henry Clay prepared a plan of gradual emancipation and colonization in Kentucky, very similar to that of Otis (Colton, *Works of Clay*, III, 346–52), but his project received nothing but abuse in the South. Cf. *The Pro-Slavery Argument* (1852), 240–41; R. J. Breckenridge, *A System of Prospective Emancipation* (1850), 227; and Hart, *Slavery and Abolition*, 239–40; Ames, *State Docs. on Fed. Relations*, no. v, 19. I have received much aid on this subject from a manuscript thesis by Miss Grace Harriman.

[18] The last mention of his plan that I have seen in any of his speeches or writings was in his anti-abolition speech of 1835. He urged gradual emancipation by federal revenue, apportioned among the slave states, to be applied "in their own way and season to that object"; but he added that he "feared the North was not yet ready to offer to concur in such a measure, nor the South to accept such offer. Their jealousy and excitement at this moment would disincline them to hear the question debated." Boston *Atlas*, August 25, 1835.

and to keep before the public the most exceptional and revolting incidents of the system. His aim was not only abolition, unconditional and immediate, but complete social and political equality of the negro and amalgamation of the races. Before long, "No Union with slaveholders" became the Garrisonian battle-cry; and because slavery was protected by the Constitution of the United States, he asserted the Constitution was a "covenant with death and an agreement with hell." In fact, he stopped at nothing short of inciting servile insurrection.

Garrison's following in the North was relatively small, even down to the Civil War; the mass of abolitionists in the Western and Middle States and many even in New England abhorred his methods and refused to recognize his authority. The conservative upper class of Boston, of which Otis was a typical member, was always at odds with him; and such of its members as Wendell Phillips and Edmund Quincy who joined him, had to face social ostracism by their relations and friends. The lower classes of the North, untouched as yet by the humanitarian spirit of the age, viewed Garrison's propaganda as an attempt to "make the nigger as good as we are"; and vented their feelings by mobbing abolitionists and negroes whenever opportunity offered. Garrison's actual following, then, was inconsiderable; but he was so effective a writer and speaker, and so skilled in the art of acquiring notoriety, that the South believed him the acknowledged mouthpiece of Northern sentiment, and acted accordingly.

In his letter of 1831 to Benjamin Hunt, Otis had stated that any attempt to suppress Garrisonian abolition by penal laws would only strengthen it; but he promised, when called upon by the South, to try the experiment of applying the curb of public opinion. That time arrived in 1835, when a fresh outburst of Southern indignation

against abolition was occasioned by the discovery in the Charleston post-office of a mass of "incendiary" abolitionist literature, presumably intended to incite the slaves to rebellion. Southern mass-meetings and the Southern press called on Northern public opinion, were it really hostile to the abolitionists, to show itself. The Boston *Atlas* immediately summoned a mass-meeting in Faneuil Hall, and urged leading citizens like Otis to attend and "vindicate the fair name" of the city. The meeting, which was held on August 21, despite Garrison's outcries at the "horrible prostitution" of the Cradle of Liberty, was a memorable affair. Faneuil Hall was filled with the best elements of Boston society, among whom were scattered numerous Southerners who had come long distances to observe Boston's attitude on the question so vital to them. Mayor Lyman was in the chair, and Peleg Sprague opened the discussion with a somewhat pungent attack on the abolitionists.[19] Harrison Gray Otis, now seventy years of age, with his matchless eloquence unimpaired, and more than ever respected and venerated by his fellow-citizens, followed him with one of the most noteworthy speeches he ever delivered.[20] His tone was calm and moderate; abstaining from invective or questioning of motives, he dwelt on the thesis that Garrisonian abolition must cease, or at least grow no stronger, if the Union were to endure. Closely acquainted as Otis was, through friendships, travel, correspondence, and a long public career, with the temper of the Southern planters, he was able to prophesy, with remarkable accuracy, their conduct in 1861. The slave-

[19] *Life of Garrison, by his Children*, I, 485–87, 502.

[20] This speech is printed in the Boston *Atlas*, August 25, 1835. There is nothing in it to warrant the assertion of Garrison's biographers (I, 498) that it was "calculated to make 'society' tolerate mob violence against the abolitionists."

holders, he told his audience, would regard any measure of militant abolition as

war in disguise, upon their lives, their property, their rights and institutions, an outrage upon their pride and honor, and the faith of contracts — menacing the purity of their women, the safety of their children, the comfort of their homes and their hearths, and in a word all that man holds dear. In these opinions they might be mistaken, but in support of them they would exhibit a spectacle of unanimity unparalleled among so numerous a population on any subject, at any time, in any part of the world. These opinions almost seem to be instinctive. They are in fact hereditary, and habitual from infancy to age. The citizens of those States have no occasion for meetings to compare sentiments, for speeches to stimulate to action, for plans to arrange and organize means of opposition. They would be ready in the case supposed for a *levée en masse* — a universal Landsturm — to seize and to use for life and for death, whatever arms their impassioned resentment could furnish, to resist every approach to interference with their domestic relations. Meetings indeed they have already begun to call — but they are like the meetings of clouds charged with the same fiery material, the occasional flashes of which serve only to show the stores of hidden thunder which are in reserve.

With this eloquent appeal Otis closed his speech:

The right of thought, and of speech, and of freedom of the press is one thing — that of combining to spread disaffection in other states, and poison the sweet fountains of domestic safety and comfort, is a different thing. This I hope my fellow citizens will see. In any event, I can have no motive to mislead them — my days are nearly numbered, and I have nothing to gain or to wish from public favor. I witnessed the adoption of the constitution, and through a long series of years have been accustomed to rely upon an adherence to it as the foundation of all my hopes for posterity. It is threatened, I think, with the most portentous danger that has yet arisen. I pray it may be dissipated — that the thirteen stripes may not be merged in two dismal stains of black and red, and that my grave may close over me before the Union descends into hers.

In a humorous commentary on his oration, contained in a letter of a few weeks later to his old friend George Harrison, Otis shows another touch of the same keen foresight:

> I sent you also the other day a paper containing my speech about the "niggers." It seemed proper to make an exertion to show to the south that the general sentiment in the north is correct upon the Slave question, and to endeavor to keep it so. This is all that can be done & that will not ultimately satisfy. The force of opinion in favor of emancipation throughout the world, must blow upon them like a perpetual trade-wind, and keep them in a constant state of agitation & discomfort, but the end of these things no man knoweth — we shall not see it.
>
> It was a risk for an old founderd horse like myself to undertake to gallop over the course, tho' it was only against time, as we were all of a mind. But I got through without bringing a joint to the ground, and find myself much puffed & panegyrized. In a Virginia paper it is said I broke forth like a "lion from his lair" — so I tell my wife she is married to Leo secundus (Uncle Jim having been our first lion) which is better than Ursa major.

William Lloyd Garrison retorted on the Faneuil Hall meeting by a stinging review of the leading speeches in the columns of the *Liberator*. Otis's speech he discussed with a comparative decency of language, which indicated a lingering respect and consideration for the object of his youthful admiration. By reminding Otis of those former exertions in his behalf, Garrison suggested that they created for him an obligation to become an abolitionist.[21] But, unable to entirely repress his customary invective, the agitator in his finale pictured Otis as a hoary-headed old sinner, who, on the brink of the grave, "under circumstances of peculiar criminality," had not scrupled "to pander to the lusts and desires of the robbers

[21] *Life of Garrison*, I, 511–13.

of God and his poor." He even composed an epitaph for the aged statesman, which read in part as follows:

Here lies the body of
H—— G—— O——
Reader, weep at human inconsistency and frailty!
The last public act of his life,
A life conspicuous for many honorable traits,
Was an earnest defense of
THE RIGHTS OF TYRANTS AND SLAVE-MONGERS
To hold in bondage, as their property,
The bodies and souls of millions of his own countrymen!

Perhaps nothing Garrison ever said or did shocked the good people of Boston more than this attack. Otis's position in the community was such, that for this despised young agitator to call him to account for his sins, seemed the height of low breeding, temerity and impudence. Yet the name of Harrison Gray Otis is but faintly remembered now, while that of William Lloyd Garrison is venerated by an entire race.

As the years went on, and the strength of Garrisonian abolition increased, Otis tended to become more conservative on the slavery question, and to urge that not only abolition, but all anti-slavery agitation should cease. In a published letter to John Whipple, of Rhode Island, in 1839,[22] he attacked the Rhode Island legislature for protesting against the Atherton ("Gag") Resolutions of Congress, and for petitioning Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. He adopted the Southern doctrine that any such proposition was unconstitutional,

[22] *Mr. Whipple's Report, and Mr. Otis's Letter*, Boston, 1839. Whipple made a minority report to the Rhode Island legislature protesting against its denunciation of the Atherton Resolutions in Congress, and wrote Otis requesting his views on the subject. In answer came, "Mr. Otis's letter."

in spite of federal jurisdiction over the District, because it would affect a domestic institution of other states. Apparently he had become reconciled to the perpetual duration of slavery, since he wrote: "If slavery is a stain, it is one with which the Union was born, and which cannot be removed by our effort unless by cutting off the limb which wears it." Otis never explained this change in his attitude, which may have come simply from his conviction that the Union could be preserved only by obeying to the letter Southern commands on the slavery question. This was the belief of such men as Cass, Pierce, and Buchanan. But it must be kept in mind that Otis at this time was a member of the Whig party, which could hold its Southern vote only by excluding the slightest taint of abolition; and also that he owned a large interest in New England cotton mills. Abolition "hurt business"; and since the world began the cry "It will hurt business!" has been the most effective obstacle in the way of reform and human rights.

Whatever may be thought of this later attitude of Otis, there can be little doubt of the soundness of his earlier idea, that any peaceful abolition of slavery must come gradually, with due regard to the rights and feelings of the South, and not through the theories of Garrison and his followers. Garrison, indeed, chose the surest methods to defeat his own ends. His coupling of emancipation propaganda with a demand for a complete social and political race equality, as well as his coarse vituperation and his disregard of vested property rights, probably foiled a promising movement for gradual emancipation in the border states. From 1843 to the Civil War, Garrison would have had the North secede from the South, and in 1861 he would have let the slave states "go in peace"; either of these policies would have perpetuated

slavery for at least another generation. His consistent abuse of the slaveholder was the chief source of that sectional misunderstanding and hatred which finally stirred the cotton states to secede rather than to support the rule of a "Black Republican" President.

As this chapter is written, almost every day brings a fiftieth anniversary of some battle of the Civil War, in which slavery was finally abolished through blood and iron. Probably a vast majority of those who think at all on this subject believe that emancipation could have been brought about in no other fashion. But in the not far distant future men will realize that if more of the mid-century leaders, North and South, had possessed the foresight, wisdom, and moderation shown by Harrison Gray Otis in 1832, there need have been no Civil War; that "Old Otis," in very truth, "was not so raving about the matter as he appeared to be."

LETTERS

BENJAMIN FANEUIL HUNT[23] TO OTIS

Charleston So Car. Oct 4, 1831

To Hon. H. G. Otis.

Sir.

I have taken the Liberty of writing to you for the purpose of obtaining accurate information relative to a seditious &

[23] Joseph W. Barnwell, Esq., writes me from Charleston as follows, March 21, 1911: "Benjamin Faneuil Hunt, Esq., came here from Boston before 1812, with his cousin Benjamin Faneuil Dunkin, afterwards Chief Justice of South Carolina and a very eminent lawyer. Mr. Hunt did not occupy a position equal to that of his cousin, but took a high position as a lawyer in criminal cases, and was considered a man of great talent. He fell into financial difficulties, and was involved in speculations which caused his ruin. He was a Union man throughout his career, and exercised much influence with his followers. As a jury lawyer he was considered, according to tradition, for he died while I was a boy, unsurpassed. He became involved in disputes and quarrels, fought a duel with one of the Ramsays, in which he wounded his opponent, and generally led quite a stormy life."

inflamatory paper called "The Liberator" circulated in the south for the purpose of exciting servile Insurrection. It is peculiarly interesting to us here to know in what light such Conduct is held in Boston. It would be much better that an actual open war were at once declared between the slave holding states and our brethren at the North, than that with the facilities of friendly Intercourse, such assaults should be made upon our lives & fortunes. It is by many doubted whether the name of Boston has not been Printed at the Head of the Paper to deceive when in reality the same is printed elsewhere. On this subject you can give exact Information. Such publications may lead to commotion but must end in the Extermination of the mass of blacks and the rigid subjection of the few who may survive, and would forever separate the south from the Union. The murder of women and children which would ensue, would engender the most bitter and irreconcileable hostility. I fear that the ambition of Politicians may by using the present Excitement give it countenance and encouragement and it becomes every man of Principle and Character to discover and Expose the immediate agents. I am sure that the People of Boston will revolt with disgust from any plan which may bring down desolation on their friends & fellow citizens, and I shall rejoice to have an opportunity of affording to the people of Charleston evidence of the fact. Being aware of your own just & enlightened Views upon this subject I have to request of you information. Whether this paper the Liberator is actually published in Boston — and if so if it receives any countenance and from whom. Also whether there are any means afforded by your laws for suppressing or punishing a systematic plan to injure the citizens of a sister state. I confess I have little confidence in any other Remedy than public opinion and am desirous of being made acquainted with the most effectual means of bringing that to operate and suggest to your better knowledge, how far an Expression of Public opinion could be secured and the Probable Effects of the attempt. I beg leave to add that some calico handkerchiefs Printed, Exhibiting negroes under circumstances calculated to elicit sympathy, have been introduced into our market and I believe most falsely stated to have been sent from Massachusetts. The Effect is dreadful and I should not be surprised if every article of Massachusetts

manufacture were committed to the flames in the city if it was certainly ascertained. I have no doubt it would cut off all commercial Intercourse with Boston. I have seen some of them and believe them to be British, and intended for the West India Market. It would afford me much satisfaction to be able to lay before our community satisfactory Proof that no such articles have been manufactured in Mass. It is important to your Manufactures, to retain the Confidence of our people — for the History of Boston in olden time is Evidence how much Popular indignation can do to interrupt commercial Intercourse and I will readily undertake to make known any Information on the subject to quiet the minds of our citizens. Perhaps your conference with the leading manufacturers may lead to some desirable result. Your Views and Character are so highly estimated here that I have availed myself of your services to prevent any rupture of those friendly relations which subsist between Charleston & Boston and trust that my motives will be an apology for the trouble I may give you. With sentiments of Respect

Yr Servt

Benjn. Faneuil Hunt

ROBERT Y. HAYNE TO OTIS

Charleston 14th Oct. 1831

Sir

I have the honor of enclosing you a Paper[24] which was lately forwarded to me from Boston by some person unknown. You will perceive that it is addressed to the "Hon Robert Y Hayne, (*Gratuitous*)," and as it is probable that the hand writing of the individual may be known in Boston, I will be obliged to you to cause the proper inquiries to be instituted on that subject and to inform me of the result. If this number of the "Liberator" had been the only one which had found its way into this State, I should probably not have troubled you on the subject. But it has come to my knowledge that Col Drayton, Mr Grimké and other Gentlemen have received several of these Papers, and I have reason to believe they are *extensively circulated* throughout the Southern States. From the enclosed publication in the "Tarborough Free Press" it appears probable that *secret agents*

[24] Number 38 of the *Liberator*.

have been employed for the purpose of distributing "incendiary publications," among a portion of our people, on whose minds they could not fail to produce the most lamentable effects. I have carefully examined the several numbers of the "Liberator," which have been lately forwarded to this place, and have no hesitation in giving my opinion that unless the circulation of such productions among the colored population of the Southern States, can *by some means* be prevented, the inevitable effect will be to produce disturbances of a serious character. I do not mean to intimate that there can ever exist the smallest *apprehension* for the permanent safety of the Citizens of any one of the Southern States. There is not one of these States in which the constituted authorities have not in their hands ample means to put down promptly and effectually all attempts of this nature. But the poor ignorant and deluded beings, who may be tempted to reenact the afflicting scenes which have lately been exhibited at Southhampton must fall victims to the wicked schemes of those who are endeavouring under the garb of religion and philanthropy to seduce them to their ruin. In presenting these views I am satisfied that they will find a cordial response from those respectable and intelligent men among you who are acquainted with the true character and actual situation of that class of our people, the amelioration of whose condition is the professed object of the publications in question, and I will not indulge the apprehension that any desire could possibly exist among any respectable portion of our northern brethren to violate those rights of property on the preservation of which the prosperity, nay the very existence of the Southern States depend. Regarding therefore the publication and distribution of such Papers as the "Liberator," as of dangerous tendency to the peace and safety of this portion of the Union, I have felt it to be my duty to call your attention to *the fact* that such a publication is issued weekly from No. 10 Merchants Hall in the City of Boston, by two persons who call themselves *William Lloyd Garrison* and *Isaac Knapp*. That 40 weekly Nos. have already been issued, and that they are circulated here with manifest danger to the peace and good order of society. It will be for you to say whether there are any measures within your power for the suppression of this dangerous practice. Should any of your citizens under-

take to introduce secretly into our community, any article calculated and intended to spread a contagious disease fatal to the health or the lives of our people, I presume it would be competent to the authorities both of South Carolina & Massachusetts, to provide for the *prevention* and punishment of the offence, and if it were possible that such articles could be publicly manufactured or prepared for exportation in the City of Boston, I presume no doubt could exist of the right or the duty of the constituted authorities of Massachusetts to interfere to prevent the perpetration of so gross an outrage. I can perceive no substantial difference between the introduction of a contagious disorder calculated to destroy the lives of our people, and the dissemination of incendiary publications, artfully framed and disseminated *for the purpose* of inciting our Slaves to insurrection. By our laws, both offences would be subjected to the severest punishment, and I should think that if our measures of precaution are found to be inadequate to suppress the evil, we would have a right to expect, that measures should be taken to prevent those from executing their purpose who in a sister State openly prepare, vend and publish articles manifestly intended to be so used. This is a matter however entirely for our consideration. I have performed my duty in simply giving you the information that such publications are issued in Boston with a view to their dissemination in the Southern States as is proved by the fact that they are secretly and gratuitously circulated and that they consist almost entirely of *false statements*, artfully contrived to delude the ignorant, and calculated to bring about violence and bloodshed. This state of things cannot be long suffered to continue without producing the most lamentable consequences, sowing jealousies and dissentions among the different portions of our Common Country, and driving us to the adoption of measures of self protection, which may interrupt the harmony and good understanding which has heretofore subsisted between the several States of this confederacy and which cannot fail to operate most fatally upon the happiness of that portion of our people for whose special benefit it is alleged that such publications are intended.

I have the honor to be very respectfully your obt Servt

Robt Y. Hayne

The Hon the Mayor of Boston

P.S. Since writing the above I perceive that a Bill of Indictment has been found in North Carolina against the individuals above mentioned.

OTIS TO NATHAN APPLETON

From the Appleton Manuscripts in the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Boston February 5 1832.

Dear Sir,

I last evening wrote to you as a private gentleman; I now address you as a *patriot*, and member of the Massachusetts delegation. You do not need to be advised by me of the tone of feeling and style of debate lately displayed in the Virginia Legislature, in reference to the dangers of slavery and the adoption of means for its abolition. To a man who took part in the 'Milsonic' [25] question, this would seem incredible but for the certain evidence of the facts. Language on that occasion glancing only at subjects which they now unfold to the glare of the world, encompassed with undisguised horrors from our lips, would have roused the whole south to a state of ferocious excitement. They would not endure any allusion whatever to a condition of things which they no longer disguise from themselves. I forget whether in a speech or formal motion, my friend King intimated some project of applying the revenue arising from the sales of the public lands to the melioration of their condition by the purchase or expatriation of slaves, but I well remember the overture was met by the south in the most ungracious manner, and repelled as an impertinent & insulting officiousness in their affairs. I presume the time has not yet come when propositions touching the same subject from the same quarter would be graciously received by the delegation from the plantation States. But to many of them *in their hearts*, it could not but be acceptable. It will not be long before application will be made by them for aid from the national treasury. Pride and temper may defer such measures for a time. Now I think it would be a grand *coup d'etat*, in the eastern states to anticipate the movement — and I would gladly see it begin with Massachusetts, and if I held your place and could obtain the concurrence of my

[25] Apparently intended as a synonym for "Missourian."

own delegation or portion of them only (a portion of the project could have the previous sanction of a goodly number from the non-slaveholding states) I would without delay present resolutions, pledging the nation to appropriate funds, in aid of such measures as should be adopted by any of the Plantation Legislatures for the removal of their Black population free or slaves. The occasion seems to me favorable and there is no subject of equivalent importance in a national view that can be presented. The threatening aspect of the increasing slave population is too appalling for contemplation. But if those directly interested, find themselves compelled to look it in the face, we who are so nearly connected with them should not avert our eyes from the precautions necessary for a corps de reserve. Were I ambitious of ever making another speech, which God knows I am not, I should exult in the opportunity of showing the dangers which await the free States, especially the borderers, whenever the swarms of these black locusts are let loose upon us in constant perennial clouds. I am aware of no higher duty or louder call that we can have to avert this calamity. And so deeply am I impressed with a sense of the right duty and expediency of the measure in a national view that I would readily apply the public revenue to the purpose of cooperation with the slave holding states, even by indemnifying the Proprietors in part or in whole. Besides the intrinsic fitness of a measure which should look to this end, embracing as it does a national fraternal principle, elevated above all sectional policy and considerations, Such overtures from us *now*, would place us on a high ground in regard to the protective system, even if not at this moment receiv'd — and whenever the south shall be ready and glad to meet them, (which time will come) there will be an end to all pretext for future clamour. You may respond — let us wait until they ask for the "boon." But I say I would offer it and hence the merit and claim of magnanimity. The offer may lay upon the table this session. But it would create sensation — produce reflection — attract public attention and prepare the minds of men for a grand system, which Massachusetts would have the merit of originating. I would have a good preamble, reciting verbatim the resolve of the Virginia Legislature, and the national considerations which urge to all measures calculated to relieve the sn. States with their

own consent from the burden of slavery &c &c &c. And then resolve that a sum not exceeding millions per annum, (whenever there shall be a surplus revenue) shall be appropriated as a fund to be apportioned among ye slaveholding states in proportion to the number of slaves by them held, and applied from time to time as their Legislatures should severally direct to the purposes of expatriating the colourd people. Of course I assume to throw out merely the "notion" in a crude form. But rely upon it you may play a great game — with all the mouths of the friends of emancipation at home and abroad to second you. The only objection, viz *our meddling*, is removd by their own act — i.e. — of Virginia. But I fear you and your colleagues will not be up to my pitch. Just consult them, it can do no harm though they should say that an old lion is no better than a green one. Sat verbum.

very respectfy yrs

H G Otis

CHAPTER XXXIII

MAYORALTY — TARIFF — CLOSING YEARS

1829–1848, ÆT. 65–83

THE mayoralty of Boston, in the years 1829, 1830, and 1831, was the last public office held by Harrison Gray Otis. His administration is not to be compared with that of his predecessor, Josiah Quincy, who set a standard of progressiveness and efficiency that has never been surpassed in the municipal history of Boston. According to certain local chroniclers, the chief event of Otis's mayoralty was an order denying the Boston cows their immemorial privilege of grazing upon the Common; — a regulation due, it is said, to appeals to the Mayor's gallantry by timid members of the fair sex. Yet Otis recommended many new enterprises and reforms that were carried out by future administrations; and his character, dignity, and wide reputation gave the office a distinction that is sadly lacking in modern times.

Otis's first inaugural address as mayor, delivered on January 5, 1829, during his controversy with John Quincy Adams over the Hartford Convention, was given a strongly personal tinge by a solemn declaration on the part of the author

> that at no time in the course of my life have I been present at any meeting of individuals public or private — of the many or the few; or privy to correspondence of whatever description, in which any proposition having for object the dissolution of the Union, or its dismemberment in any shape, or a separate con-

federacy, or a forcible resistance to the Government or laws was ever made or debated.[1]

This assertion is an excellent example of the weakness of old men's memories; for Gouverneur Morris had, as we know, proposed secession in a letter to Otis, and more than once propositions of forcible resistance had been put forward in his presence at caucuses and legislatures.

Otis, nevertheless, did touch in his address on several subjects of vital importance to his city, such as the necessity for Boston and Massachusetts of a system of railroads and steamship lines:

> The question will arise and we must be prepared to meet it, not whether Rail Roads are subjects of lucrative speculation, but whether they be not indispensable to save this State and City from insignificance and decay. It would be quite premature to enlarge in a dissertation on particulars connected with this subject. Unless the surveys and calculations of skilful persons employed in this business are fallacious, there is no doubt that a Rail Road from this city to the Hudson may be made with no greater elevation in any part than is found between the Head of Long Wharf and the Old State House; and that the income would pay the interest of the capital employed.

Although Otis's ideas of Massachusetts topography were decidedly hazy, there was no doubt but that "this State and City must be up and doing," as he remarked elsewhere in the address, "or the streams of our prosperity will seek other channels." No railroad charter had as yet been granted in Massachusetts,[2] although actual construction had begun in other states. The country members of the legislature blocked every project for state ownership, and frightened private capital by constructing a free bridge adjoining the Charles River toll-bridge,

[1] J. Quincy, *Municipal History of Boston*, 287.

[2] Except that of the Quincy Granite Railroad.

of which Otis and many other wealthy Bostonians were stockholders. When three railroad charters were finally granted to private corporations, Otis refused to subscribe for a single share of stock, partly because of the Charles River Bridge affair, partly because his capital was already safely and profitably employed. He and a few other capitalists with similar views made the Western Railroad a gift of several thousand dollars, that tided it over a very critical period; but this and other early railroads were financed almost wholly by the middle class.[3]

Other progressive recommendations in Otis's inaugural addresses were for harbor improvements, which were soon carried out; for filling in the Back Bay, a project postponed for twenty-five years; and for a city water supply, which was not procured until 1848. Up to that year even the Otis mansion, then considered a model of comfort and luxury, contained no plumbing of any description: all the water for drinking and other purposes was obtained from wells in the yard.

The humanitarian movement, of which Garrisonian abolition was one manifestation, reached its height while Otis was mayor. In 1829, the Rev. Joseph Tuckerman, a prominent missionary pastor, addressed an open letter to him disclosing a shocking state of affairs in the city jail and house of correction.[4] No attempt had yet been made to classify the prisoners other than by sex: first offenders and the harmless insane were confined during the night in the same cell with hardened criminals. Within six years fifty-eight lunatics had been committed to Boston jails for the sole purpose of saving the city the expense of

[3] C. F. Adams, "Canal and Railroad Enterprises of Boston," in J. Winsor, *Boston*, IV; manuscript correspondence between Otis and George Morey, director of the Boston & Worcester.

[4] *A Letter addressed to the Hon. Harrison Gray Otis . . . respecting the House of Correction and the Common Jail.* Boston, 1830.

their board in the state asylum. Otis, like most mayors, was more interested in the commercial prosperity of his city than in humanitarian reforms; but a paragraph of his inaugural address of 1830, recommending immediate measures for segregation of the insane and the hardened criminals, shows that he was not insensible to Mr. Tuckerman's appeal.[5] He had long been active, moreover, in the movement for the abolition of imprisonment for debt, which in 1830 existed in every state of the Union save Kentucky. The condition of poor debtors in America at that period, would fit Dickens's pitiful descriptions of the same class in England. Otis, when a member of the Fifth Congress, had secured a law abolishing imprisonment for debt to the federal government,[6] but his efforts to procure a similar reform in Massachusetts were unsuccessful until 1834. In September, 1831, he presided at a meeting in the Old Court-House, that drew up resolutions favoring the total abolition of this practice, and showed himself so zealous for reform that a "Committee of Gentlemen friendly to the Abolishment of Imprisonment for Debt" nominated him for State Senator. Otis replied, however, "I am not aware of any possible inducement that would allure me again to be a candidate for a seat in any legislative body upon earth."

Since party feeling had not yet penetrated the municipal government, Otis's administrations were relatively uneventful, and were conducted so informally as to permit him to be inaugurated in his own house, in 1830, on account of a temporary indisposition. Yet the routine work of his office soon dulled Otis's appetite for governing Boston, and in 1831, at the end of his third term, he refused to stand for reëlection. For the rest of his life

[5] Quincy, *Municipal History of Boston*, 303.
[6] See above, chap. VI.

he was free to devote himself to his family and his financial interests.

In Otis's correspondence, as in that of many another statesman whose career bridged the division point of 1815, can be traced a gradual change of attitude on the tariff question, as the result of a change in the economic interests of himself and his section. Commercial, and therefore free-trading, interests had always dominated the Federal party during the period of embargo and war, and it was some time before the manufacturing interests became sufficiently powerful to influence local politics. When the Baldwin Tariff Bill of 1820 was before Congress, Otis, then in the Senate, wrote his wife:

> I really consider the interests of Boston and indeed of Commerce jeoparded by this bill, and my vote and exertions may be very much wanted. Under the pretence of aiding Massachusetts, which measure would receive my hearty concurrence, duties are contemplated on imported articles essential to the interests of navigation and commerce which if carried to the extent proposed will prove the foundation of measures for reducing the Navy.

Otis's contrary vote in the Senate killed the Baldwin Bill; and his position was sustained at a Boston anti-tariff meeting in October, 1820, by men later identified with protection. Massachusetts and most of northern New England joined the solid South in voting against the tariffs of 1824 and 1828, but New England, in the mean time, was undergoing an economic revolution. With the establishment of the first cotton mill at Lawrence in 1822, and of the Merrimack Mills in the newly founded city of Lowell, in 1823, began a tremendous extension of the factory system. Otis early fell in with the new movement. Before 1823 he had purchased a majority interest,

about $100,000, in the Taunton Manufacturing Company, a consolidation of several cotton, woolen, and rolling mills;[7] and he secured blocks of stock, large for that time, in the Chicopee, Neponset, Hampshire, Bristol Print, and Amesbury companies. He wrote George Harrison on March 21, 1823:

> There has been a curious "*revival*" in the spirits of men and a reaction in the affairs and business of this city which is quite remarkable. Two years ago our sun had sunk never to rise again, as many said and more feared. Manufacturing stock with its liabilities made a man to be considered so much minus, — All is now reversed and the stocks as well as spirits have risen *inordinately*. I have never known an impression so deep and general in favor of the prospects as well as actual prosperity of the business people. No doubt it is exceedingly overrated, but the change is certainly for the better. Those who held on to their stock in companies whose capital was paid have all come well upon their legs. I am offered 10 per cent above par for my stock in Chicopee & Amesbury of which I hold 38000 dollars. Last year I could not have sold it for more than 50 per cent. It was as good then in fact as it is now — It gives 10 per cent, and I mean to hold it. Taunton in fact is doing *better* than any of them — Yet the market value is yet less. It is amazing to see what is done by the puff on one hand and the panic on the other.

The following year Henry Clay took up in Congress the policy of internal improvements and protection to home industries, which he christened the "American System," and in Boston the protection issue soon became predominant in congressional elections. Otis took an active part in the congressional campaign of 1830 in favor of Nathan Appleton, the protection candidate, and presented in a speech many of the time-worn arguments for protection that are still dressed up for the voters' consumption every two years. He first replied to the as-

[7] S. E. Emery, *History of Taunton*, 648.

sertions of sundry newspapers, that the mayor of Boston should not interfere in politics. "I did not understand," he said, "that by the acceptance of the office I now hold, I was disfranchised of the rights of opinion and speech; and that, while every man in the city showed his colors, it was my duty to sit in the Mayor's chair like a reverend Owl brooding over chaos amid the strife of the political elements" — a sentiment in which Mr. Otis's modern successors will heartily concur. He explained his change of attitude as Webster had done two years before, on the ground that New England had been kicked into manufacturing by the policy of the federal government, and was now dependent for its existence on a continuance of that policy.[8] "*Tempora mutantur*," Otis wrote Henry Clay two years later, "and I am among those who have been coerced by the policy of government *mutari cum illis*." [9]

Although Henry Clay had made himself the father of protection, Jacksonian Democracy had as yet taken no definite attitude on the tariff question, and Otis evidently thought best to seek tariff favors from the powers that be. His bitter controversy with Adams also tended to attach him to the Jackson administration. Shortly after Jackson's first inauguration, Otis wrote to Martin Van Buren, the Secretary of State, expressing his confidence in the new President, and offering him the use of his house in case a presidential tour of New England should take place. In 1831 and 1832 he addressed ten-page letters to Jackson's Secretary of the Treasury, pointing out that the old Federalists were inclined to favor Jackson, and could be attached permanently to his party by tariff favors and a conservative attitude towards the United

[8] *Mr. Otis's Speech . . . on the evening preceding the late Election.* Boston, 1830.
[9] C. Colton, *Private Correspondence of Clay*, 328.

States Bank. At the same time, thinking doubtless that it was prudent to play both sides, he kept in close touch with the leading National Republicans in Congress. Among his papers for 1832 are a number of letters from such men as Daniel Webster, Henry A. S. Dearborn, Nathan Appleton, and John Davis, informing him of the progress of the tariff bill of that year. He even made a short visit to Washington, in order to consult with the leaders. Evidently Otis was a power to be reckoned with in the manufacturing world.

South Carolina, at this stage, was preparing to nullify the protective system by a practical application of the principles supported by Otis between 1809 and 1815. If Otis saw the similarity, he did not acknowledge it; like all exponents of state rights, he denied the doctrine when applied by others contrary to the interests of his section.[10] South Carolina, on her part, was loath to appeal for precedent to the "Patriotick Proceedings" or to the Hartford Convention, which her statesmen had been accustomed to denounce as treasonable. Otis's opinion of state rights as construed in the South is expressed in a letter to George Harrison of November 20, 1832, four days before the South Carolina convention passed the ordinance of nullification:

> Public affairs will give you and me who had resolvd to think no more of them, sufficient excitement for the rest of our lives, I fear. I never remember a gloom, foreboding & uncertainty respecting public affairs, so general since Lexington battle, when I was 9 years old. That we shall have treason and insurrection in fact, I can no longer doubt. If called by their right names, and treated with their appropriate remedies, they will

[10] Nathan Dane makes an amusing attempt, in his *Abridgement and Digest of American Law*, IX, 594, to prove that there was no similarity between Calhoun's doctrine of nullification and the theory under which Governor Strong refused to call out the militia.

be put down, and *the consequences of an unsuccessful revolt will be more beneficial than all other measures* to bring & for a time to keep everything right. But if tamper'd with, as I fear they will be — "My native land good-night."

President Jackson struck a vigorous blow for the Union in his proclamation of December 11, 1832, against the nullifiers. In order to show the President that Boston, though opposed to him in politics, would back him up on this occasion, Otis at once organized a mass meeting in Faneuil Hall, acted as the presiding officer, and addressed the enthusiastic assembly with a speech second only to Webster's. Again he comments on the situation in a letter to George Harrison of February 20, 1833, that is full of unconscious humor for readers who have followed his past career:

The proclamation of Jackson was one of those measures which a federal saint of the old school has a right to call providential, and which a federal sinner may regard as most wonderfully opportune and happy for the Country. The absurd heresies respecting State rights, consolidation, secession &c, which were from the first the sources of our dangers were revived under circumstances favorable to their spread, and men were growing wild with these fantasies. A small bias in a wrong direction would have given a tremendously dangerous turn to affairs in the South — and at this juncture, to see such a *poser* to the State rights sticklers from such a source was certainly a source of great joy and comfort to me. That it would be gall & wormwood to Virginia and to Jacksons friends generally, I *felt* the moment I had become satisfied of the genuineness of the proclamation & was equally persuaded that we of the old school should lose no time in expressing our approbation of our own principles, by whomsoever promulgated. I went to work con amore to get up ye Town meeting, and though opposed by many doubters and tremblers, I believe all agree now that it was a good lead. Hundreds who [would] have dashed the cup in the face of Mr Clay or of an angel, have been compelled to hold their noses and swallow. And thousands who would have

regarded the doctrines as diabolical if broached by a federalist, will now read, ponder & inwardly digest and the true character of State sovereignty will come to be better understood. For my part I thank old Hicky, tho' I never conceived that such wholesome waters would come from a bitter fountain.

But with all this we have & shall have troubles eno' "The South when they cease to govern will refuse to be governed." This is an old maxim of the "Boston Port." They are united by their black belt & are an overmatch for us as yet.

While the President and South Carolina shouted defiance at one another, the more cautious members of Congress, led by Henry Clay, began to revise the tariff in order to avoid a clash of arms. Otis regarded a compromise with dismay, as this letter to Henry A. S. Dearborn, dated December 29, 1832, indicates:

Taking it for granted, that some reduction in the scale of protective duties must sooner or later, (and indeed very soon) be made in complaince with the plausible tho' unsound notion, that import duties should not exceed the amount required for mere revenue, the question arises, whether it be expedient for the present Congress to act in effecting such reduction, rather than leave it to their successors. [Any reduction now will be] forever claimed & considered, & justly too, as a concession made to an Organized Conspiracy to oppose the laws, securing to the Conspirators an effective triumph, of most dangerous example, furnishing a fatal precedent, that will be often resorted to, for bullying, browbeating and threatening the non-slaveholding States in all future as it has been in all past time into an abandonment of their own and the adoption of the Virginia policy and doctrines. . . . Give alms to a beggar who wears a drawn sword in his hand and tell him if you please it is pour l'amour de Dieu, he will laugh in his sleeve and impute it to un peur de l'Epée, and he will never beg afterwards without a sword. So it will be with the Cavaliers and Wrongheads of the South, who are all united against us in fact. . . . The men who with an effrontery without parallel, have given to treasonable conspiracy the sacrilegeous mask of holy insurrection, will in all time hereafter be quoted and canonized as the Pyms &

Hampdens & Sydneys of an oppress'd people by the advocates of State rights if their exactions are complied with, while they preserve this offensive & menacing attitude.[11]

Events of the next thirty years showed that Otis was a good prophet. For the present, South Carolina emerged from the nullification contest with colors flying, having secured a reduction of the tariff. Otis's affairs prospered nevertheless, for at the beginning of the panic of 1837, he estimated the value of his property as $533,000, of which about $400,000 was in Boston real estate and the rest in cotton manufactories, all of which were sound enough to take him through the panic without serious loss. On January 9, 1835, he wrote Samuel Crocker, a fellow-director and owner of the Taunton Manufacturing Company:

> The rumour of your profits will make people *delirious*. I hope however you will make hay while the sun shines. . . . I should have voted with you for 15 per Cent, though I want the 20 enough — But it seems too good. You remember my fears and prophecies about the former 20 per cent. If I could afford it, I would nail up the post notes at the side of my drawer, as they nail up a horseshoe sometimes, to keep the Devil out.[12]

By this time Otis had ceased to coquette with Jacksonian Democracy, and had become a stalwart Whig, the name taken in 1834 by a fusion of the National Republicans with various anti-Jackson factions. His admiration for the President's courage in 1832 was not proof against the shock given his conservative instincts by Jackson's attacks on the United States Bank. "I have just read the Old Turk's firman against the Bank. Another appeal to the worst passions of the community — jealousy, envy

[11] MS. collection of Herbert Foster Otis, Esq. Two other letters from Otis to Dearborn on the same subject are printed anonymously in the *National Intelligencer* of December 22, 1832, and February 26, 1833.

[12] Crocker MSS.

& cupidity," he wrote on September 27, 1833. The removal of the deposits, to which he referred, drove almost every old Federalist into the Whig party, which now took the place of the Federal party as the protector of property and society. But the decade of the thirties was a disheartening period for conservatives. Democracy, after capturing the federal government, was invading the state governments one after another, tinkering state constitutions, destroying banks, assailing protected industries and financial interests of every sort, corrupting the civil service, and rendering public life intolerable to gentlemen. It captured even the Supreme Court, the last stronghold of Federalism, and in the Charles River Bridge case upheld an act of the Massachusetts legislature that virtually confiscated a part of Otis's property. Otis's letters at this period are full of vain regrets that the fatal step of universal suffrage had ever been taken, and of pessimistic forebodings of disunion and a war of classes.

It was also in this period that a series of domestic calamities befell Otis, that were especially hard to bear for a man of such strong family affections. The deaths of his two eldest daughters, Elizabeth Gray Lyman and Sally Thorndike, were shortly followed, in 1827, by that of his eldest son, Harrison Gray Otis, Jr. For a brief five years the place of his daughters was taken by a new daughter-in-law, that rare example of feminine loveliness in form and character, Emily Marshall. There may be as beautiful women to-day as Emily Marshall, but no American woman has ever inspired such admiration and love as she received during her brief lifetime.[13] Although every young man in Boston was in love with her — except Mr. William Amory, who used to boast of the fact in

[13] For Emily Marshall, see Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past*, and V. T. Peacock, *Famous American Belles*.

his old age as his chief title to fame, — William Foster Otis won her heart. They were married on May 18, 1831, when she was twenty-three years of age, and he not quite thirty.

The bridegroom's sister, Mrs. Andrew Ritchie, thus describes the wedding, and incidentally throws light on the nuptial customs of the period, in a letter of May 20, 1831:

> There were fifty guests at the wedding, an enormous crowd at the visit, which kept us until half past ten from supper. The bride looked very lovely, and was unaffected and modest. Her dress was beautiful, a white crêpe lisse with a rich line of silver embroidery at the top of the deep hem. The neck and sleeves trimmed with three rows of elegant blonde lace very wide. Gloves embroidered with silver, stockings ditto. Her black hair dressed plain in front, high bows with a few orange blossoms, and a rich blonde lace scarf beautifully arranged on her head, one end hanging front over her left shoulder, the other hanging behind over her right. No ornaments of any kind either on her neck or ears, not even a buckle. I never saw her look better. Mr. Lyman said she was extremely beautiful, and that every one was remarking on her beauty as they passed in and out of the room. . . . William looked quite as handsome as the bride, and seemed highly delighted. The groom & bride went to their house [No. 71 Beacon St.] alone, about one o'clock. Finch & Boott went to bed about six in the morning, after serenading until the birds sang as loud as their instruments. . . .

Mr. and Mrs. Otis, for some unknown reason, had been opposed to their son's match, but were speedily reconciled to it upon better acquaintance with their daughter-in-law, as the following extract from a letter from Otis to George Harrison, dated November 28, 1831, indicates:

> William's wife turns out to be one of the most amiable, domestic and artless creatures in the world. My wife grows *very* fond of her. And once, when William was calld to the

EMILY MARSHALL

From a portrait by Chester Harding.

country on professional business (she having a cold & complaining) the former would have her bro't home, and actually *divided her bed* with her several nights, fearing that she would be timid & nervous left alone in another chamber. How I said nothing but laughed in my sleeve, & remembered *your prophesy*, that this would be so! Do you likewise say nothing but laugh with your wife.

Less than five years after this letter was written, and shortly after the birth of her third child, Emily Marshall Otis died, a martyr to the primitive surgery of the period. Within three weeks there came for Otis the greatest calamity of his lifetime, the death of his beloved wife. In the following simple and touching note of September 6, 1836, he informed the chief marshal of the Harvard Centennial, Robert C. Winthrop, of his inability to preside at that ceremony the next day:

My dear Sir

Though I felt that the death of my daughter a few days since disqualified me in a great measure from assisting at the approaching festival, yet feeling it to be an occasion in its nature solemn as well as joyous, I perseverd as you know in my intention to preside at the meeting. It has pleased the Almighty this day to remove by a sudden dispensation the wife of my youth, & it will be less unexpected by you that I should now find myself totally incompetent to that duty, than, that I should have the recollection and the power of announcing it under my own hand.

With great respect

H. G. Otis.[14]

Three years before, Otis had lost his youngest and favorite son George, and now only four of his eleven children were left. Yet he refused to give way to despondency, and by keeping his interest in local and national affairs, he regained his former cheerfulness and geniality. Al-

[14] MS. collection of Harvard College Library.

most by accident he came into touch again with national politics. When Henry Clay sent him, in March, 1838, a copy of his speech on the Sub-Treasury Bill, Otis, in acknowledging the favor, expressed his wish that Clay might be the next Whig nominee for the presidency. Now Clay's most formidable rival for this honor was Daniel Webster, for whom Massachusetts had voted in 1836; but Otis, although a friend and admirer of Webster, was enough of a politician to see that a Western candidate must be selected. Perceiving this fact, Clay replied with a long letter in which he adroitly dropped a hint to the effect that Otis might persuade Webster to abdicate his pretensions. Thus began a lengthy correspondence between Clay and Otis on the subject of the Whig nomination, that lasted through the years 1838, 1839, and 1840. Otis and his fellow relics of the Federal party seem to have had little influence, however, over Webster, who reluctantly withdrew his own name from the canvass, but supported Clay's other and successful rival, William Henry Harrison. Then followed the famous log-cabin, hard-cider, Tippecanoe-and-Tyler-too campaign of 1840, into which Otis entered with the ardor of a young politician, notwithstanding the fact that a prominent feature of the campaign was the accusation of Hartford Convention Federalism which each side brought against the other. This letter of his to George Harrison, dated October 31, 1840, shows how completely the old Otis spirit was restored:

I am marvellously well for 75 — and think of this time last year with a thankful heart. Were it not for my feet I should be *frisky* but so many old fools play the part of Lord Ogleby, that it is perhaps best for me to be warn'd constantly not to attempt it. Yesterday was the D——l to pay with you [in Pennsylvania] no doubt. I have of course no sort of information as to

your agitation. But prophesy that you are beat in your State. If I am wrong, I will addict myself to democracy, confess my sins, and die in a bonnet rouge. What a "glorious winter" of blood & carnage would accompany the present struggle of factions if we had such a place as Paris . . .

What an important week is this coming, and who expected in our "palmy days" to see the federalists glad to make backs for others to play leap frog! Yet such is our position as a pis aller. If all will do, to stop the progress of the infernal machine, universal suffrage, before it comes to the place where it will blow up the "entire concern" we may congratulate ourselves.

Otis, who was naturally delighted at the success of Harrison and Tyler, wrote George Harrison after the election, that the *bonnet rouge* was already purchased and ready for him to be laid out in. But this keen old politician, observing danger ahead for the Whig party, sent a warning letter to Henry Clay, December 16, 1840:

The whig party is a coalition of persons, brought together from the four ends of our earth, led by instinctive impulse, not merely by compact of leaders, & united, (so far as the evidence goes,) as yet in only one defined object — a change of men. The other object, a change of measures, is far enough from being *defined*. It would be a fair & wise step in Genl. Harrison to throw upon the shoulders of yourself and a few leaders and representatives of the great subdivisions of party, the responsibility of forming his cabinet of persons who should be consulted & agreed beforehand, upon the principal features of the system to be pursued. The project of the Campaign should be arranged in such a Cabinet. Such measures only should be attempted as all are agreed in, & this should be pushed with vigor and carried. Thus a broad foundation could be laid for the formation of a great "Country party," on primary principles and mutual concession, extending in every direction & embracing all the great interests of the Country. Such a party has not yet existed among us; Events seem to indicate the practicability of forming it. Unless it be done, the cossacks will be upon you in one or two years. Mais peut-etre cela ne sera pas mon affaire.

Henry Clay's reply, expressing a belief that the Democratic party was "annihilated," showed he was less perspicacious than his old Federalist friend. The untimely death of President Harrison, and the breach between President Tyler and his party, rendered barren the Whig victory of 1840 and made Otis again a pessimist in politics. He wrote George Harrison on October 25, 1842:

> Harrisons election shook my confidence in my opinion as to the certain ultimate result of universal suffrage, & the irresistible tendency of the masses to acquire & abuse power. But this only pour le moment. Mob principles, hatred to elevated character, jealousy of property, & a disposition to make all interests subservient to the views of the Canaille. In a word, agitation, incessant & unmitigated will keep this people in perpetual turmoil & render the Country an uncomfortable domicil for honest men & quiet gentlemen. But these troubles cannot come to you or me — at least not stay with us long. Happily you have no children, on whose uncertain fate to ruminate with anxiety.

The last eight years of Otis's life were much more active than those of most retired statesmen past threescore and ten. His sons Alleyne and William Foster and his only surviving daughter, Mrs. Andrew Ritchie, the last two with their families of small children, came to live with him after the death of Mrs. Otis. This contact with the younger generations kept the old gentleman young in heart. A friend of one of his grandchildren has described to me a dinner at the family mansion at which Otis, though over eighty years of age, was by far the most lively person present, and entertained the company by singing an old English hunting-song. Although frequently suffering from severe attacks of that irritating and exhausting disease, the gout, he managed to keep up horseback exercise until

the age of eighty, to make every year a journey by stage and rail to Newport, or Philadelphia, or Sharon Springs, and to preserve his tact and good nature unimpaired. "We shall not quit Beacon Street," he writes in July, 1843, "as our name is legion, and two or three generations like to come here to eat drink & smoke it"; yet in September he goes off on a "jaunt," as he calls it, to Albany and West Point by the newly opened Western Railroad. Most of his time, however, was spent in his library, acquiring new friendships with books, to make up for the friends he had lost. He taught himself Italian at the age of sixty-nine, and the wealth of literary allusions in the writings of his later years testify to the breadth and depth of his reading in English, French, Italian, and classic literature, for that was before the days of "Familiar Quotations" and "Readers' Handbooks."

A few of Otis's pleasant letters to George Harrison will best indicate his thoughts and pursuits during these last years of his life:

Boston Sepr 2 1841

Well my dear friend, the summer has gone again like a butterfly, & you and I with railroad speed are getting to the end of our journey. Dont you wish you knew what sort of accommodations await us there. We have no right to expect them to be *comparatively* as good as we have had here. It would be more than our share. Perhaps you would be satisfied to know that they will be not worse than at Longbranch. I hope dear Mrs H has enjoyed herself among the mermaids, & am glad that none of the Gods have descended in any shape to swim away with her. I have been doing little more than vegetate — making some repairs in my earthly tabernacle & driving out to visit Sophy who is 5 miles in the Country at a farmhouse which she seems to like for the occasion of moving around ad libitum with her girl. But I generally sleep at home, though I have a room there — but I want a servant & appliances, having conquered all lusts of the flesh except that of a fleshbrush. . . . I

wish you could see my new wineroom. Old children want baby houses as well as "beads & prayer books" for the toys of old age. I have much comfort in my drosky. If you ever see Doctor Jackson enquire if his forewheels turn *quite round* to the crane neck—mine do not but I think they should. God bless you. Afty

H. G. Otis

The "drosky" mentioned here was probably the same vehicle to which Josiah Quincy alludes, in his *Figures of the Past,* as the first low-hung carriage ever seen in Boston. It saved Mr. Otis the trouble of climbing the formidable flight of steps by which one entered the old-fashioned coach. The gouty old gentleman's first appearance down town in his new vehicle created a sensation, according to Mr. Quincy. "What will you take for your carriage, Mr. Otis?" inquired a friend. "The worst pair of legs in State Street!" was the characteristic reply.

To proceed with the letters from Otis to George Harrison.

March 5, 1842:

I wonder if you & I shall ever meet again. The chances are against it, for though I am amazingly well in the *organics;* & have been to two soirées this winter, with a blue coat, yellow buttons plum tree velvet vest, & made a prodigious sensation; yet I cannot walk a mile without pain & have more or less *light* chronic gout flying about me, so that I am cowardly about being haul'd up from home, without a man to rub my back.

December 7, 1844, after Clay's defeat by Polk:

What fine encouraging times since we met. It is a wonder in my mind that I feel so deeply the defeat of the Whigs as if it were a recent calamity; when in truth for more than 50 years I have lived under a deep conviction that democratic rule goes on from bad to worse with occasional pauses — and though I have had strong hopes, I have indulged as in the late struggle

but feeble expectations. The general complexion of parties has been the same since the days of Jefferson — the predominance of ignorance and *mulishness* in Pennsylvania has also been conspicuous — ever since and before Israel —— was a candidate for public honors & Peters said "right, Gentlemen — let us have stable men and stable measures." I have lately seen a letter from the *elder* Adams to a lady — in which he stated that among other causes of his then late defeat in his canvas for President of the United States was a story propagated and believed thro all the German population, that he had imported three mistresses from England, but finding them un peu de trop, had sent them back at the public expense. And still equally absurd stories were current as he learnt at York Pennsyla., as he learnt from a German clergyman who came to him in that place under great concern and weight of conscience to know from old John if they were true. The difference however — & it is very great — consists in this. The problem to be solved under the Federal Govt, was whether by means of its peculiar modification, the conservative principles indispensable to the salvation of every government, could be maintained against the steam power of universal suffrage, and the ignorance and passions of the masses. The trials have been for the most part discouraging but not so as to extinguish all hope. But this is a consummation which leaves nothing to be expected. The intelligent, educated, substantial and patriotic portion of the community are under the everlasting ban and power of a nominating caucus — in fact an elective body — representing all the anticonservative passions & prejudices & bad feelings of increasing millions. Are you sorry that they will have no chance to torment or push you long? — God bless you

yr H G Otis

February 7, 1845 :

The only amusing occurrence of any note is the new subscription for Webster. The project is to raise a fund of 100,000 dollars here & in N York, the income to be settled on him & his wife for life, reversion to ye subscribers. It is confidently said that it will be filled — indeed is nearly so at this moment. I

think his good fortune is almost equal to his political preeminence and quite equal to his claims. This is at least the third time that the wind has been raised for him and the most curious fact is that thousands are subscribed by many, who hold his old notes for other thousands, and who have not been backward in their censures of his profusion. I am not a subscriber — not able to be one — though I think it a great point to have him replaced in the Senate — of which the Whig minority will combine great talents, and afford the possibility of preventing or mitigating mischief. This affair of W's reminds me of George Selwyns wit. When a subscription was raised for Charles Fox, somebody adverting to the delicacy of the subject, expressed his wonder how Fox would *take it.* "Take it" said Selwyn "quarterly to be sure!"

In this same year (1845) the death of George Harrison brought an end to the sixty years' friendship between him and Harrison Gray Otis, who had now reached his eightieth year. Most of his friends and comtemporaries were dead; he clung only the more tenaciously to those who survived, — such men as Colonel Perkins, and that aged Maryland diplomat, Christopher Hughes — witty, delightful "Kit" Hughes, everybody's friend. There are many of his quaintly punctuated letters among Otis's papers of the forties. The two old gentlemen loved to match good stories, to compare notes on the gout, and to send each other presents of champagne and of "Eastern Sho'" hams, of which the Otis family managed to consume several barrels yearly. Otis's mind dwelt more and more on the past; he delighted younger men, like Josiah Quincy, who loved to dine with him, with his racy anecdotes of the great men of the Federalist era; and he frequently furnished biographers and others with charming letters of reminiscence.

During the winter of 1847–48, in his eighty-third year, Otis was attacked by an unusually severe fit of the gout,

followed by gangrene of the great toe. Yet his marvelous constitution pulled him through; and so irrepressible was his spirit and energy, that once more he was able to take an active part in politics. The temperance movement, which won its earliest victories in Massachusetts, was the first issue to draw him from his long retirement. In 1848 there was danger of the reënactment of the "fifteen gallon law," of 1838, prohibiting the sale of less than fifteen gallons of liquor at one time, the movement for the repeal of which Otis had led. It seemed to this ancient conservative the height of democratic tyranny for a legislature to prescribe what he should or should not drink. He therefore wrote, in April, 1848, a long argument against coercive temperance measures, in the form of a letter to a member of the Massachusetts legislature. It was shortly published, as from "An Aged and Retired Citizen of Boston," and was thought good enough to be republished in 1867.

Nor was this activity sufficient to exhaust the energy of Harrison Gray Otis at the age of eighty-three. 1848 was a presidential year; the Whigs, defeated in 1844 on the Texas question, now prepared to draw advantage from the Mexican War by nominating one of its heroes, General Zachary Taylor of Louisiana, for the presidency. Otis addressed a Whig caucus in the beginning of the campaign, and adverted as usual to the Hartford Convention, again assuring his audience that it was a pure and patriotic body, summoned for honorable and legitimate purposes. There was something pathetic in this ancient veteran of the political arena, reiterating in the last speech of his life arguments that no one would believe, in favor of that utterly discredited and disavowed convention. But there was nothing pathetic or apologetic about the next, and last, action of his career. Daniel Webster's statement, in the heat of disappointed ambition, that the nom-

ination of Taylor was "not fit to be made," and the defection of a group of anti-slavery Whigs because Taylor was a slaveholder, caused Otis to fear for the success of his party. He therefore put all his remaining energy into an article in defense of the Whigs and their nomination. The result was no ordinary production, but a letter of some fifty-three hundred words addressed "To the People of Massachusetts," and written in all the freshness and vigor of his early style.[15] A creditable performance for a man of any age, it was nothing short of remarkable for this venerable statesman on the brink of the grave. He showed himself out of sympathy with the recent acquisitions of territory, as an old New England Federalist naturally would be, but in close touch with the problems and questions of the day. He exposed the corruption and executive usurpation of past Democratic administrations, the danger to the Union of the Abolitionist and Free Soil parties, and the necessity of letting the South manage its internal affairs in its own way. The most eloquent passage is that in which he disposes of the objection that General Taylor was a soldier, not a statesman:

> The truth, however, is that a truly great man will always show himself great. The talents called forth by the strategy of a succession of military campaigns, in a country new and unexplored, and inaccessible by ordinary means, where resources must be created, and embarrassments not to be foreseen are constantly met and surmounted, would easily accommodate themselves to the varying, though less difficult exigencies of civil affairs. For myself, I rest satisfied that General Taylor would be found fully competent to the office of president, for the same reasons that I think Daniel Webster would make a great general. Each would require some little training and experience, in a new harness, and, perhaps, a good deal of con-

[15] It appeared in the Boston *Atlas* of October 2, 1848, just six days before Otis's eighty-third birthday.

sultation with others. History is replete with heroes transformed into statesmen. Who is unacquainted with the agency and influence of the great Marlborough, in the councils as well as in the wars of Queen Anne? Where did the greater Duke of Wellington qualify himself to settle the peace of Europe, which he had won by his sword, associated in congress with emperors and kings, and the most accomplished diplomatists from the principal cabinets of the old world? And whence did he derive the faculty which since that period has been displayed, in the intuitive sagacity with which he has controlled the measures of the British cabinet and peerage, and enabled his country to persevere in her career of power and glory, despite the most novel and serious embarrassments? In what school did the great Napoleon acquire the knowledge of affairs which enabled him to hold the strings of his administration in his own hands, to reform the interior management of the whole empire, and to preside in a council of the most distinguished jurists and civilians in the formation of the civil code, himself initiating some of the most essential improvements? Finally, our own great Washington was a Samson in combat before he became a Solomon in council. On very mature reflection, I am satisfied that General Taylor, in a short time after he shall have taken the chair, will acquit himself of his high duties to the entire public satisfaction.

This "Letter to the People of Massachusetts" was Otis's supreme effort. For some months he had been troubled by a severe pain in the back, and shortly after writing the "Letter," exhaustion and weakness confined him to his bed. His stomach refused food, little by little his strength ebbed away, and, surrounded by his devoted children and grandchildren, he quietly awaited the end. Every function of his vigorous mind remained unimpaired almost until the very last. He followed with keen interest the details of the presidential campaign, and read with dismay the comments on his "Letter" by the Democratic press, which reiterated as usual the charge of Hartford Convention treason that he had so long and fruit-

lessly endeavored to explode. As he lay dying, the aged statesman could hear the Whig processions marching up Beacon Hill; hear the lusty shouts as company after company halted and gave with a will "Three cheers for Harrison Gray Otis!" — for the people of Boston had not forgotten their old favorite of Federalist days in his last hours. On October 26 he lost the power of speech, and fell into a sweet and tranquil slumber from which he never awoke; and at two o'clock in the morning of Saturday, October 28, 1848, his gentle breathing grew more and more faint, and finally ceased.

> "Of no distemper, of no blast he died,
> But fell like autumn fruit that mellowed long;
> Even wondered at, because he dropt no sooner.
> Fate seemed to wind him up for fourscore years;
> Yet freshly ran he on ten winters more:
> Till, like a clock worn out with eating time,
> The wheels of weary life at last stood still."

Harrison Gray Otis had acquitted himself more than creditably in the career marked out for him by heredity, education, and unusual attainments of mind and heart. He had not shown, it is true, much evidence of great or original statesmanship. The sectional movement, that culminated in the short-sighted and unnecessary Hartford Convention, was the policy on which he had exerted the most pronounced influence. But his worthiest efforts in the national portion of his career, his spirited nationalism of 1798, his wise policy of sectional reconciliation in 1816, and his proffered solution of the slavery question, deserve the highest praise. Otis, moreover, represented all that was best in a class — the ruling aristocracy of New England, and of a party — the Federal party, which he followed through all its aberrations, from its lofty national-

ism to its narrow and selfish sectionalism; and led the way back to nationalism again. His guiding principle, throughout his life, was a belief that the government of the United States and of the several states should be conducted by the wealthy and educated classes. He was firmly convinced that democracy would lead to a leveling downward of society, and to the dissolution of the Union. The noble self-sacrifice, endurance, and devotion to a sentiment, that the American democracy showed fifteen years after his death, he would never have imagined possible.

Otis, in truth, belonged more to the eighteenth than to the nineteenth century. He had no ambition for territorial expansion or world power for his country; his ideal was a "right little, tight little" nation, with its back on the Mississippi and its face toward the Atlantic, with merchant princes and country squires for its rulers. Since the manifest destiny of the United States has been otherwise, we may say that it was well that Otis and his friends were swept out of national power at the beginning of the nineteenth century. But Massachusetts has little reason to complain of her long experience of Federalist rule. While other states, in which Democracy early came to its own, were swimming in political corruption and extravagance, the Federalist administrations in Massachusetts set a standard in honesty, efficiency, and wise advance, that no government of and by the people has surpassed.

The personality of Harrison Gray Otis was singularly well-rounded and attractive. In him were blended all the qualities that make up a man beloved by men; and he was indeed beloved, during and after his lifetime, as few men have been. Sociable without dissipation, clever without affectation, brilliant without hypocrisy, he retained

through years of disappointment and domestic misfortune a genial, sunny nature that shed happiness around it. Few men have extracted so much pleasure from mere living and doing as he. With a wife whom he dearly loved, a little clan of relatives and descendants who adored him, wealth won by his own efforts, devoted friends in all parts of the country, an enviable reputation as a lawyer and orator, and a public career crowned by the approbation of his fellow-citizens, he could have asked for little more than he possessed. Had Otis been inclined to seek from Providence one more boon, it would have been that his countrymen should take him at his word, when he told them that the Hartford Convention was intended to save not to destroy, the Union of the States.

THE END

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE excellent bibliographies of United States history now available render it unnecessary to describe here anything more than the manuscript sources utilized in writing this work. I have added, however, a list of Otis's own works, believing that it will be of value as a bibliographical contribution. I wish here to express my gratitude to the many individuals and institutions who have greatly facilitated my labors by placing at my disposal the manuscripts in their possession.

MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

The principal source of this work has been the *Harrison Gray Otis MSS.*, which (except "3") are now the property of Mrs. John Holmes Morison. They consist in (1) Otis's letter-book, 1788–1803, 249 folio pages. Valuable only for his life before 1797. (2) Personal and political correspondence, 1795–1848, about 1200 pieces. At the beginning very scanty, this series grows larger about 1808, but must be at its best only a fragment of the letters Otis received. It contains very few copies of his own letters for any period. (3) Letters from Otis to his wife, and from Mr. and Mrs. Otis to their daughter Sophia (Mrs. Andrew Ritchie), 1790–1832. This series is practically complete, and contains about 575 pieces. It is the property of Miss Sophia Ritchie. (4) Letters from Otis to George Harrison, mainly in the period 1820–45, returned to the family through the kindness of the recipient's heir, George Harrison Fisher, Esq. (5) A large number of business letters and documents, chiefly relating to real estate transactions.

Of Otis's own letters, outside the Otis MSS., there are about twenty to William Sullivan in the Ford Collection, now in the *MS. Collection of the New York Public Library;* a number of interest in the *MS. Collection of Herbert Foster Otis, Esq.*, and a few in other libraries and private collections.

The *Adams MSS.*, undoubtedly the most valuable family archives in the United states, were opened to me, through the intercession of Mr. Worthington C. Ford, by the Adams heirs: an act of singular graciousness to the descendant and biographer of their grandfather's ancient enemy.

The *Pickering MSS.*, in the Massachusetts Historical Society, have

been one of the most important sources for Otis's life, notwithstanding the fact that he was not one of Pickering's correspondents. They are rendered available by an excellent *Historical Index* (*Mass. Hist. Collections*, 6th ser., VIII), which seldom indicates, however, whether a given letter has been printed. Other collections in the same institution that proved to be of value for this subject were the *James Otis MSS.*, the *Robbins MSS.*, and the *Nathan Appleton MSS.*

In the Library of Congress the following have been consulted, with varying success: the *Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Webster, William Plumer, William Eustis*, and *John Henry MSS.*

Of manuscript collections in private hands I am indebted to Winslow Warren, Esq., for access to the *Warren MSS.*, containing several letters from S. A. and H. G. Otis to James and Mercy Warren; to Worthington C. Ford, Esq., for transcripts of important letters in the *Noah Webster MSS.*, to Miss Sarah L. Guild, for access to the *Samuel Crocker MSS.*, and for permission to reproduce one of them; to William C. Pennington, Esq., of Baltimore, for access to the valuable *Robert Goodloe Harper MSS.*, and the loan of Otis's letters contained therein; to Christopher Hughes Manly, Esq., for access to the *Christopher Hughes MSS.;* to Mrs. Linzee Prescott, for access to the *Prescott MSS.*, to Miss Catherine Austin, for the loan of the remaining *Elbridge Gerry MSS.;* and to Edward Hopkinson, Esq., of Philadelphia, for access to and transcripts from the *Joseph Hopkinson MSS.*

For the Hartford Convention, I have made an earnest endeavor to discover manuscripts of the members through an extended correspondence with their descendants and with historical societies; but my researches have resulted only in the discovery of the *Longfellow MSS.*, in the possession of Miss Longfellow of Portland, who kindly lent me all that related to the subject; the *Treadwell MSS.*, in the Connecticut Historical Society; the *Sherman MSS.*, in the Bridgeport Scientific Society; the *Dane MSS.*, in the Massachusetts Historical Society; and the *Prescott MSS.*, at Pepperell, Massachusetts. The last two contain nothing that I can discover relating to the Convention.

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INDEX

Abbreviations: Fed. = Federal *or* Federalist, Hart. Con. = Hartford Convention. O. = Harrison Gray Otis.

Abolition, chap. XXXII.
Adams, Abigail (Mrs. John.) **I,** 19, 130, 132, 222–24.
Adams, G. W. **I,** 254.
Adams, Henry. Quoted, **I,** 47, 102, 269, **II,** 4, 9, 14, 23, 62, 200.
Adams, John. **I,** 9, 47, 221–24, 254, **II,** 130; during presidency, **I,** 60, 62, 116, 126, 132–33, chaps. VI, VII, X, XI *passim*, **II,** 303; letters to **O.**, **I,** 157, 174.
Adams, J. Q. Character, **I,** 218, 221, 235; relations with **O.**, 31, 221–24, 328, **II,** 210, 215–16, 249–50, 255, 284; with Fed. party and Hart. Con., **I,** 267–69, 277, 294, 327–29, **II,** 7–9, 62, 79, 92, 108, 156–59, 225, 228, 245–50, 255.
Adams, Samuel. **I,** 37, 48.
Adet, P. A. **I,** 70.
Alexandria, Va. **I,** 145, **II,** 96, 100, 259.
Alien Act. **I,** 95, 106, 109–15.
Aliens. Influence in politics, **I,** 107–15, 154, **II,** 152, 155.
Allen, Andrew and Jeremiah. **I,** 234.
Alston, Washington. **I,** 247.
Amendments to the Constitution. **I,** 109, 263, **II,** 10, 12, 113–16, 144–45, 152–57, 171, 177, 180, 186, 192, 222.
American Revolution. **I,** 8–26, 45–49.
Ames, Fisher. **I,** 48, 52, 57, 92, 266; quoted, 41, 63, 157, 190, 202, 261, 265; letter to **O.**, 85.
Anderson, Joseph, **II,** 2.
Anti-Federalist party. **I,** 46, 186; *see* Democratic party.
Appleton, Nathan. **II,** 264, 288–91. Letter from **O.**, 281.
Apthorp, *Mr. and Mrs.* C. W. **I,** 43, 143, 145.
Army Acts (of 1798). **I.** 95, 100–03, 159, 200.
Austin, Benj. **I,** 52, 53.
Austin, J. T. **II,** 25.

Bache, B. F. **I,** 62.
Bagot, *Mr. and Mrs.* Charles. **II,** 211–13.
Bailey, John. **II,** 216.
Bainbridge, *Commodore.* **II,** 100, 101.
Baltimore. Riots of 1812, **II,** 48–51.
Banks. **I,** 49, 58, 86, 96, 260–61, **II,** 65–67, 71–77, 160, 291, 294–95.
Barbour, James, **I,** 121, **II,** 214.
Baring, Alex. (Lord Ashburton). **I,** 136.
Baring, Henry. **I,** 138.
Barlow, Joel. **I,** 171, **II,** 46, 124.
Barnstable, Mass. **I,** 1, 2, 15–20.
Bayard, J. A. **I,** 61, 118, 145, 174, 206–09, 221, **II,** 181.
Baylies, Hodijah. **II,** 133. Letter to **O.**, 142.
Bemis, Joseph. **II,** 102.
Benson, Egbert. **I,** 305, **II,** 129.
Benton, T. H. **II,** 228.
Biddle, Nicholas, **II,** 172.
Bigelow, Timothy. **I,** 288, 305–06, 326, **II,** 13, 47, 119, 122, 132, 138, 190–91.
Bingham family. **I,** 133–39, 143.
Blair, James. **II,** 268.
Blake, Francis. **II,** 89, 94. 111.
Blake, George. **II,** 10, 209.

Bliss, George. **II**, 133, 138, 145.
Boston. Politics: **I**, chap. XVI; **1765–1800:** 8–13, 18–24, 52–58, 86–96; **1801–15:** 276–77, 284, 330, 335, **II**, 20–26, 50, chap. XXI, 95–101; **1822–30:** 236–39, 246–54, 284–90. Abolition, chap. XXXII. Celebrations, etc., 20–22, 54–56, 207–09. City Charter, 236–37. Clubs, **I**, 226–27. Economic life, 27, 40, 242–48, 283, **II**, 284–90. Literature, **I**, 244–48. Militia, 30–31. Schools, 6–8, 20. Society, 218, 226–34. Theatre, 37–38. Topography, 5, 42–44, 229–30, 243–44, **II**, 286.
"Boston Seat," **I**, 54.
Bowdoin, James. **I**, 48. James Jr., 58.
Breck, Samuel. **I**, 41, 142.
Brooks, John. **I**, 288, **II**, 98, 208, 240–41.
Brooks, P. C. **I**, 228, 233.
Brown, John. **I**, 135.
Burr, Aaron. *See* Elections, **1800–01** and Secession, **1804.**
Bussey, Benj. **I**, 28, 228, 234.

Cabot, George. **I**, 48, 55, 92, 98, 153, 266, 305, 307, 318, **II**, 30, 75; and Hart. Con., **II**, 105, 112, 125, 130–31, 145, 156. Letter to **O.**, **I**, 335.
Canning, George. **II**, 1, 17–18, 22.
Carroll, Charles. **I**, 185, **II**, 120.
Caucuses. **I**, 79, 97, 150, 185, 195, 211, chap. XVI, **II**, 239, 252–53.
Champlin, *Mr. and Mrs.* Christopher. **I**, 135, 142–43.
Channing, F. D. **I**, 291.
Channing, W. E. **II**, 55, 56.
Chesapeake affair. **I**, 161, 276, 284–85, 321–22, 329.
Cheverus, *Bishop.* **I**, 55.
Chittenden, Martin. **II**, 64–65, 107.
Clay, Henry. **II**, 32–35, 210, 214, 232, 269, 289–93, 298–300, 302; Letter from **O.**, 299.
Clergy. **I**, 57, 84; **II**, 57, 62, 184–88, 241.
Clinton, De Witt. **I**, 308–11, 316–18, **II**, 62–63.
Clinton, George. **I**, 306–07.
Codman, Richard. **I**, 170–71. Letter to **O.**, 113, 168.
Colden, C. D. **I**, 315.
Commerce, Political influence of. **I**, 46–48, 53–55, 87, 274–75, 282–85, 321–26. **II**, 34, 41, 70–71, 152, 194, 288.
Committees, political. **I**, 186, chap. XVI *passim*, **II**, 14.
Congress. **5th, I**, 60–62; debates, chaps. V–VIII *passim*, **II**, 221–22. **6th, I**, 176–77, debates, 178–82, 199–214, **II**, 220. **10th, II**, 1–3, 13. **12th**, 32–35. **14th–16th**, 171, 213–15, 223–33.
Connecticut. Politics, **I**, 264–67, 270, 273, **II**, 13, 64, 105–106, 161.
Conventions. County, **I**, 286, 290, **II**, 4, 6, 10, 60–61, 108. Fed. national, **I**, 303–20. State, **II**, 59–61, 82–83, 234–35. *See* Hartford, Nashville, New England.
Cook, Orchard. **I**, 331.
Copley, J. S. **I**, 43; J. S. Jr., 43, 49.
Crawford, W. H. **II**, 245.
Crocker, Samuel. Letter from **O.**, **II**. 294.
Cushing, Wm. **I**, 189, 192.

Dallas, A. J. Correspondence with **O.**, **II**, 169, 196–97.
Dana, Samuel. **I**, 286, **II**, 57, 235.
Dane, Nathan. **II**, 111, 132, 144–47. Hart. Con. schedules, 193–95.
Davie, W. R. **I**, 176, **II**, 129.
Davis, Daniel. **I**, 234.
Davis, I. P. **I**, 220, 232–33.
Dawes, Thos. **I**, 58, 94, 215.
Dawson, John. **I**, 24, 148.
Dayton, Jonathan. **I**, 61, 99, 176, 185.
Dearborn, Henry. **I**, 291.
Dearborn, H. A. S. **II**, 268. Letters to **O.**, 268, 291; from **O.**, 293–94.
Debtors, **I**, 77, **II**, 286–87.

De Freire, *Madame*. **I**, 130, 132.
Democracy. Fed. fears of, **I**, 48–51, 62, 262–66, 301, **II**, 300, 302, 309.
Democratic party (Jeffersonian). Genesis, **I**, 46–52. Policy, **1793–1800**: chaps. VI–VIII *passim*, 178–81, 186, 191, *see* Elections, **1800–01**. Policy, **1802–13**: *see* Jefferson, Madison, War of 1812. Clubs, **I**, 50–51. Machinery, 286, 290. And Hart. Con., **II**, 93–95, 126–28, 140, 157–58, 167, 171, 203, 217. In Mass., **I**, 48–53, 57, 88–94, 96, 258, 271–73, **II**, 26–28, 47, 57, 207, chap. XXXI.
Derby, E. H. **I**, 234.
Dexter, Samuel. **I**, 41, 48, 189, 220, 254, 294, 297, 309, **II**, 60–61, 93, 100, 118. Letter to **O.**, **I**, 319.
Dupont, Victor. **I**, 168.
Dwight, Josiah. Letters to **O.**, **I**, 312, 333.
Dwight, Theodore. **II**, 105, 125, 139, 142; letters from **O.**, 142, 204.
Dwight, Timothy. **II**, 8.

Edwards, Wm. **I**, 313, **II**, 29–30.
Elections, **1788–98**, **I**, 48, 54, 57–58, 154–55, 176. **1800–01**, chap. XI, 203–14, 258. **1802–11**, 257–58, 270–73, 279–81, 303–08, 314, 326, 332. **II**, 26. **1812–14**, **I**, 308–11, 315–20, **II**, 28, 62–63, 68, 93–94, 104, 171, 178. **1815–48**, **I**, 150, **II**, 202, 235, 240–54, 298–300, 305–08. Conduct of, in Mass., **I**, 293–98, **II**, 237.
Ellsworth, Oliver. **I**, 184–85.
Ely's Amendment. **I**, 263, 268, **II**, 154.
Embargoes. **II**, 10, 12, 154, 192. Of **1808**, **I**, 246, 298, chap. XVII, **II**, chap. XVIII. Of **1813**, 70, 85–86, 95, 174.
Erskine, D. M. **II**, 17–19.
Essex County. **I**, 48, 331, **II**, 4, 10, 60, 94, 104, 243.
Essex Junto. **I**, 48, 73, 92, 99, 153, 165, 184, 190, 220, 257, 266, 275–77, 291, 305, chap. XVII, **II**, chap. XVIII, 25, 75, 117–21, 130, 245, 253–54.
Eustis, Wm. **I**, 96, **II**, 10, 241–44.
Everett, Edward. **I**, 225, **II**, 180–82.

Federal party.[1] Character and distribution, **I**, 46–52, 176, 210–11, chap. XVI, **II**, 93–94, 104, 203. In Mass., **1788–1801**: **I**, 48–58, 186. Policy, **1796–98**: chaps. V–VIII. Breach in, **1799–1801**: chaps. X–XII. Decline, **1804–07**: chap. XV. Renaissance, **1808**: **I**, 326. Policy, **1809–15**: **II**, chap. XVII *et seq.*; *see* Hartford Convention. After **1815**: **II**, 201–03, 213–14, 225–28, chap. XXXI. And society, **I**, 126, 148, 150, 227–29. Machinery, chap. XVI, 333–35, **II**, 14.
Fessenden, Samuel. **II**, 89, 94, 111, 175.
Fitzsimons, Thos. **I**, 305–06.
Force Act. **II**, 2–3, 10–12.
Foster, Sally. *See* Otis, S. F.
Foster, Wm. **I**, 35, 222. Letters from **O.**, 144, **II**, 210.
France. American policy, **I**, 59–60, 63–77, 80–98, 116. Change in, **1798**: 151, 161–73, 179, 191; *see* Napoleon. Influence on Dem. party, 51–52, 70–75, 81, 86, 93, 173.
Francis, *Mr. and Mrs.* T. W. **I**, 135, 142, 145.
French Revolution. **I**, 49–52, **II**, 106, **O.**'s opinion of, **I**, 64, 108.

Gales, Joseph. **II**, 168, 210. Letter to **O.**, **I**, 63.
Gallatin, Albert, **I**, 25, 61, 100–01, 119–20, **II**, 2. **O.**'s attacks on, **I**, 56, 74, 77.
Gardiner, W. H. **I**, 256. Letter of, **II**, 208.

[1] Only the most important references can be given here, information on the Federal party being scattered through the entire work. See also Elections and names of states.

Gardner, John. Letter to **O.**, **I**, 90.
Garrison, W. L. **II**, 246, 258–64, 269–81.
General Court. *See* Massachusetts, legislature.
Georgetown, D. C. **I**, 144–49.
Gerry, Elbridge. **I**, 47, 152–54, 168, 189, 192, 227. **II**, 20, 26–28, 57, 118.
Ghent, Peace of, **II**, 67, 73, 76, 117, 124, 164–68, 171, 181, 196–98, 200–01.
Giles, W. B. **I**, 61, 80, 91, **II**, 2.
Gilman, J. T. **II**, 107. Letter to **O.**, 181.
Goddard, Calvin. **II**, 135, 144, 195. Letter to **O.**, 142.
Goodrich, Chauncey. **I**, 61, **II**, 134, 144, 156, 190.
Gore, Christopher. **I**, 41, 48, 53, 294, 305–09, 318, 327, 330, **II**, 28, 56. And Hart. Con., 6, 110–12, 119–20.
Gorham, Benj. **II**, 246.
Gray, Edward. **I**, 4.
Gray Harrison. **I**, 4, 9–11, 14–19, 38–40. Letter from **O.**, 33; to **O.**, 37.
Gray, Harrison, Jr. **I**, 19, 239. Letters from **O.**, 54, **II**, 36–40; to **O.**, **I**, 239, 284, **II**, 39–40.
Gray, "Jack." **I**, 18, 239–41.
Gray, Wm. **I**, 87, 228, **II**, 74.
Great Britain. American policy, **1794–1815**: **I**, 53–55, 274–76, 321–22, **II**, 17–18, 22, 32–40, 96–101, 123. Influence on Fed. party, **I**, 51–52, 69, 75, 111, 117, 160, 174, 273–77, 284, 325–27, **II**, 18–22, 35–36, 42–48, 99.
Greene, Gardiner. **I**, 233, 243.
Griffith, Wm. **I**, 309.
Griswold, Roger, **I**, 61, 78–79, 87, 265–67.
Grosvenor, T. P. Letter to **O.**, **II**, 29.

Hall, Wm., Jr. **II**. 108, 138.
Hamilton, Alexander. **I**, 46–47, 62, 72, 99, 102, 142–53, 157–67, 188–91, 205, 267, 302. Letters from **O.**, 158, 204, **O.**'s eulogy on, 250.
Hamilton, J. A. **II**. 129.
Hampshire County. **I**, 48, 318–19, 333, **II**, 42, 60, 86–88, 94, 104, 132, 196–97, 245.
Hancock, John. **I**, 38–40, 48.
Hanson, A. C. **II**, 117, 214.
Hare, C. W. **I**, 304–06, **II**, 67, 88, 113–14, 118. Letters to **O.**, **I**, 305, **II**, 73–75, 174–80.
Harper, R. G. **I**, 61, 67, 74, 82, 99, 109, 119, 170, 176, 178, 185, 189–98, 207, 211, 220, 306, 310. Letters to **O.**, 192–98, 280. From **O.**, 246, 271, 282, **II**, 180.
Harrison, George. **I**, 127, 135, 140, 233–34. Letters from **O.**, **II**, 273, 289, 292, 296, 300–04.
Hartford Convention. Origin, **II**, chap. XXII, 95–99, 174–180; *see* New England Convention. Summons by Mass., 99–105. Reception in N. E., 105–09, 181, 184–88; outside N. E., 117–18, 126–30, 178–84, 192. Objects, of **O.**, and moderate Feds., 110–16, 121; of radical Feds., 117–22, 174–80. Dem. opinion, 126–30. Members, 130–39. Secrecy, 139–43. Sessions, 125, 139–46, 189–91. Journal, 141, 144, 215. Report, 145–57, 193–95; public opinion of, 157–58, 129; action of states on, 160–62, 166, 171. Effect of peace on, 165–67, 171. Effect on **O.**, and other members, 172, 203–04, 237, 242–43, 298, 307. **O.**'s defense of, **I**, 251, **II**, 78, 215, 244–45, 249, 284, 305, 310. In election of **1828**, 247–48.
Harvard College. **I**, 2–3, 23–25, 55, 252–56, **II**, 95.
Hayne, R. Y. **II**, 261, 267. Letter to **O.**, 278.
Hazard, Benj. **II**, 136, 144–45.
Heath, Wm. **I**, 90–91, 154–55. Letter to **O.**, 88. **O's.** published let-

ter to, 67–70, 85, 94, 101–102, 116, 251, 323.
Henry, John. **II**, 8, 43–48, 69, 126, 242.
Higginson, Stephen. **I**, 48, 92, 94, 161, 328. Opinion of **O.**, 73, 164–66, 266.
Hill, Henry. **I**, 130–31.
Hillhouse, James. **I**, 185, **II**, 134.
Hoar, Samuel. **II**, 94.
Hoffman, J. O. Letters to **O.**, **I**, 309, 315, 316.
Holmes, John. **II**, 95, 97, 104, 234.
Hopkinson, Joseph. **I**, 140. Letter from **O.**, **II**, 254.
Howard, J. E. **I**, 145.
Hubbard, Samuel. **II**, 245.
Huger, Benj. **I**, 149.
Hughes, Christopher. **II**, 202, 206, 304.
Hunt, B. F. Letter to **O.**, **II**, 376, 261. **O.**'s reply, 262–64.
Hunter, Wm. **II**, 214.
Hyde de Neuville, *Baronne*. **II**, 211.

Impressment. **I**, 161, 274–77, 284. **II**, 41, 73, 116.
Irish, *see* Aliens.

Jackson, Andrew. **II**, 128, 248, 290–94.
Jackson, Charles. **I**, 192, 318–19, **II**, 249.
Jackson, F. J. **II**, 18–22. Letter to **O.**, 30.
Jarvis, Charles. **I**, 36, 52.
Jay, John. **I**, 54–57, 59, 176, 309, 319.
Jefferson, Thos. In opposition, **I**, 46–47, 70–71, 74–75, 81, 84, 97–100, 133; *see* Elections, 1800–01. As President, 150, 162, 257, 279, chaps. XVII–XVIII. Fed. opinion of, 204, 212–14, 298, 312, 335. Opinion of Hart. Con., **II**, 137, 172.
Jesup, T. S. **II**, 128–29.
Jones, J. Coffin. **I**, 53, 94.
Jones, S., Jr., **I**, 315.
Joy, Benj. **I**, 44, 227, 319.
Judiciary Act. **I**, 201–02.

Kendall, Amos. **II**, 47.
Kentucky and Virginia Resolves. **I**, 114, 120, 162. **II**, 4.
King, Rufus. **I**, 83, 107, 227, 267, 306, 309–10, **II**, 83, 98, 118, 129, 214, 224–33, *passim*.
Knox, Henry. **I**, 160, 192.

Law and Lawyers. **I**, 2–3, 27–33, 41–42, 119–23, 154–55, 251, **II**, 137.
Lee, Henry. **I**, 141, 181, **II**, 49.
Lewis, Ellen Custis (*Mrs.* Lawrence L.) Letter to **O.**, **II**, 259.
Lewis, Ezekiel, **I**, 4.
Lexington, Battle of. **I**, 13.
Lincoln, Benj. **I**, 30–31.
Lincoln, Levi. **II**, 11. Jr., 94, 102.
Livingston, Edw. **I**, 55, 61, 103.
Lloyd, James, Jr. **I**, 305–06, 328, **II**, 41, 73, 88, 98. Mem. on loans, 72. Report of 1814, 90–92.
Logan, George. **I**, 155, 169–71.
Longfellow, Stephen, Jr. **II**, 115, 133. Correspondence with Mrs. L., 139–40, 189, 191.
Louisiana. French designs on, **I**, 66, 83, 162, 191. Feds. and, 161, 261–70, 279, **II**, 24, 68–71, 154, 195.
Louis-Philippe. **I**, 134, 139.
Lovell, James and John. **I**, 6–8.
Lowell, John. **I**, 28–29, 92, 202, 213.
Lowell, John, Jr. **I**, 41, 48, 233, 303, **II**, 24–25, 95, 116, 119–23, 227–28, 249, 252. Letters to **O.**, 75, 253.
Loyalists. **I**, 18–19, 23; *see* Gray, Harrison.
Lyman, Daniel. **II**, 136, 144, 156.
Lyman, Joseph. **II**, 87, 132.
Lyman, Rev. Joseph. **II**, 155. Letter, 184.
Lyman, Theodore. **I**, 53, 233, 247, **II**, 31, 76, 271.
Lyman, Theodore, Jr. **II**, 78, 247–48.

Lyon, Matthew. **I,** 56, 78–79, 87, 176. **II,** 214–15.

Macon, Nathaniel. **I,** 61, 99, **II,** 210.
Madeira wine. **I,** 233–34.
Madison, Dolly. **II,** 168, 206.
Madison, James. **I,** 53, 74, 331, **II,** 17–25, 44–48, 85, 98, 117–18, 128 161–63, 168–69, 176–77, 196–97, 206.
Maine. **II,** 86, 91, 96, 104, 160, 234.
Manton, Edw., **II,** 136.
Manufactures. **II,** 53, 201, 288–91, 294.
Marshall, Emily. *See* Otis, E. M.
Marshall, John. **I,** 84, 98, 151, 156, 178, 202, 309.
Maryland. **I,** 187, 192–98. **II,** 129. 203.
Mason, Jeremiah. **II,** 110.
Mason, Jonathan, Jr. **I,** 43, 145 164, 222–23, 233, 243, 295, 330–31, **II,** 253. Letters to **O., I,** 76–77, 81, 86–96, 171; from **O.,** 89.
Massachusetts. During embargo and war, chaps. XVII–XXVIII *passim*; in **1815, II,** 201. Legislature, before **1801: I,** 57, 95–96, 186–87 ; **1802–08:** chap. xv, 330; **1809–11: II,** 11–13, 19, 27–30, 47; **1812–15:** 47, 48, chaps. XXI–XXIII, 160–62, 174, 178. Judiciary, **I,** 258–60, **II,** 27, 63. Politics, *see* names of parties, Conventions, Elections. Suffrage, **II,** 235. Vote for Governor, **1812–24:** 93, 235, 240. War claims, 162, 169, 198, 216–18, 224.
Mayhew, Jonathan. **I,** 10.
McDonnough, *Commodore.* **II,** 191.
McHenry, James. **I,** 99, 158, 185–97 *passim.*
Mellen, Prentiss. **I,** 24, 234.
Mercer, C. F. **II,** 268.
Middling Interest. **I,** 261, **II,** 238–39, 251–52.
Militia question. **II,** 56, 63–65, 95–99, 113, 143–45, 151, 160–63, 166, 216–18.
Minot, G. R. **I,** 202.
Mississippi Territory Act, **II,** 221–22.
Missouri Compromise, **II,** 222–33.
Monroe, James. **I,** 60, 62, 87, 231, **II,** 44–46, 128, 168, 202–11, 216.
Morris, Gouverneur. **I,** 278, **II,** 61, 82–85, 117, 129, 157. Letters to **O.,** 84, 182; from **O.,** 184.
Morris, Robert. **I,** 29, 139–40.
Mortefontaine, Treaty of. **I,** 191, 205, 214.
Morton, Perez. **I,** 227, 291.
Mount Vernon. **I,** 145–47.
Murray, John. **I,** 84.

Napoleon. **I,** 69, 74, 241, 273–75, 280, 321–22, 325, **II,** 1, 22–25, 87, 42, 55–59, 95, 96, 307.
Nashville Convention. **II,** 81.
Naturalization Act. **I,** 106–10.
Navy. **I,** 100, 104, 200, 325. **II,** 41, 54.
New England *or* Northern Convention. Of **1779–80: II,** 80. Proposed in **1808:** 4–10, 81; in **1812–13:** 61, 82–84; in **1814:** 87–92, 95, 103; *see* Hartford Convention.
New Hampshire. **I,** 273, 287, **II,** 68, 107–08, 181.
New Jersey. **II,** 59, 129, 192.
New Orleans, Battle of. **II,** 163–64.
New York. **I,** 305–09, 332, **II,** 29, 82–84, 129.
Newspapers. **I,** 299, 312.
Nicholas, John. **I,** 61–65, 72, 101, 119, 178–79, 185, 201.
Non-Intercourse Act. **II,** 17, 23–24.
North Carolina. **I,** 194–95, **II,** 129.
Nullification. **I,** 124, **II,** 10–12, 24–26, 81, 90–91, 151, 175, 291–94.

Oakley. **I,** 230.
Ogden, D. B. **I,** 309, **II,** 83–84.
Ohio. **I,** 262, 315, **II,** 162.
Olcott, Mills. **II,** 108, 137.
Old Hampshire, *see* Hampshire County.

Oratory. **I,** 31, 248–52.
Orders in Council. **O.**'s influence on repeal, **II,** 36–40.
Otis, Eliza Boardman (*Mrs.* H. G. O., Jr.). **I,** 238.
Otis, Elizabeth Gray (*Mrs.* S. A. O.). **I,** 4, 14–23.
Otis, Emily Marshall. (*Mrs* W. F. O.). **II,** 295–97.
Otis, Harriet. **I,** 228, **II,** 45, 49–50.
Otis, Harrison Gray. 1765: birth, **I,** 1, 5. **1773:** to Latin School, 6. **1775:** recollections, 12; at Barnstable, 14–20. **1776:** return to Boston, 20–23. **1779:** to Harvard, 23. **1783:** graduates, studies law, travels, 25–29. **1786:** admitted to bar, 29. **1787:** in Shays's Rebellion, 30. **1788:** oration, 31. **1790:** marriage, 34–36. **1792:** theatre affair, 37. **1794:** politics, 53–54. **1795:** Copley purchase, 42–44. **1796:** Appointed director U. S. Bank and U. S. dist. atty., elected to Gen. Court and Congress, 49, 55–58. **1797–99:** life at Phila., 125–43. **1797:** in Congress, 63–65, 73–74, 108, 235. **1798:** in Congress, chaps. VI–VIII, 158–61, **II,** 121–22; political embassies, **I,** 152–53; reëlection, 154; *see* Heath, Wm. **1799:** in Congress, 170, 177; "Envoy" letters, 163–67. **1800–01:** in Congress, 177–82, 199–210, 236, **II,** 220; in elections, **I,** 182–97, 204–09; life at Washington, 143–50, 215; appointed U. S. dist. atty., 203. **1802–07:** in Mass. legislature, 236, 257–60, 271–72; and secession plot, 267–69; and local enterprises, 243–46, 283. **1807:** new mansion, 229; in *Chesapeake* meeting, 277. **1808:** in national convention, 304–08; and embargo, 327–32. **II,** 4–10, 81. **1809–11:** in legislature, 10–15, 26–30; reception of Jackson, 19–22, 30; in nullification meeting, 24–26; war policy, 33–40. **1812:** and Henry plot, 47; in town meetings, 50, 58–61; in the national convention, **I,** 308–11, 316–19. **1813:** in legislature, 68–70; in Moscow fête, 55; financial policy, 66–67, 71–77. **1814:** in winter session legislature, 88–92; re-elected, appointed judge, made LL.D., 95; and local defense, 99–101; decides to call Hart. Con., 101; his motives, 110–16, 181, 184; report of, and resolves of Oct. 8, 102–04, 114, 160, 178; circular letter, 104, 114; chosen member, 105; influence and work at Hartford, 125–31, 138–46, 189–90; and the Report, 148. **1815:** "embassy" to Washington, chap. XXVII, 195–99; attitude toward peace, 164–65. **1816:** reconciliation policy, 202, **I,** 222–24; declines nomination for governor, 236, 288; and separation of Maine, **II,** 234. **1817:** elected Senator U. S., 204, **I,** 237; entertains Monroe, **II,** 206–09. **1817–22:** as Senator, 209–18, **I,** 121–23. **1819–21:** and Missouri Compromise, **II,** 224–33. **1820:** and Baldwin bill, 288; and Mass. convention, 235. **1822:** and city charter, **I,** 246, **II,** 236–37; defeated for mayor, 239. **1823:** defeated for Governor, 241–43; new interests, 288–89. **1824:** publishes "Otis' Letters," 244. **1828:** on electoral ticket, 248; Adams controversy, 249–50; elected mayor, **I,** 250, **II,** 251. **1829–31:** mayoralty, 284–87; protection speech, 289; and *Liberator*, 257–64. **1832:** emancipation scheme, 264–69; and nullification, 291–94. **1835:** abolition speech, 271–73. **1838:** whig politics, 298. **1839:** letter to Whipple, 274. **1840–48:** 298–308.
Otis, Harrison Gray, Jr. **I,** 238, 254, 302, **II,** 252, 295.

Otis, *Col.* James. **I,** 2, 3, 8, 11, 17.
Otis, James, Jr. **I,** 3, 8–9, 27.
Otis, John. **I,** 1, 2.
Otis, Joseph. **I,** 3, 17, 22, 27.
Otis, Mary (2d wife of S. A. O.). **I,** 35, 222.
Otis, Sally Foster (*Mrs.* H. G. O.). **I,** 34–36, 127, 215, 222–23, **II,** 297. Letters, **I,** 145, **II,** 205. Letters from **O., 1798–1801: I,** 69, 75–76, 127–50, 177–82, 200–08, 215, 235–37. **1814–15: II,** 125, 163–65, 168–71, 189–90. **1816–20: I,** 237, **II,** 212–15, 219, 228.
Otis, Samuel A. **I,** 3, 4, 11–23, 27, 34–35, 127, 303, 329, **II,** 12.
Otis, Samuel A., Jr. **I,** 22.
Otis, Wm. F. **I,** 233, 238, 254, **II,** 296, 300.

Pamphlets. **I,** 300, 313.
Parish, David. **II,** 66, 67, 73, 74. Letter to **O.,** 71.
Parker, Isaac. **II,** 95. Letter to **O.,** 235.
Parker, Nahum. **II,** 7.
Parris, A. K. **II,** 95.
Parsons, Theophilus. **I,** 41, 42, 48, 94, 219, 227–28, 259–60, 266, 297, 308. **II,** 30, 119. Letter to **O., I,** 213.
Pearson, Joseph. **I,** 309.
Pennsylvania. **I.** 307, 312, **II,** 172, 303; *see* Hare.
Perceval, Spencer. Letter of, **II,** 38.
Perkins, T. H. **I,** 5, 16, 20, 228, 233, 243, 291. **II,** 67, 94, 161–71, 181, 238, 249. Letters to **O., I,** 94, **II,** 251; to Sullivan, **II,** 316. Reports signed by, **I,** 195–99.
Philadelphia society. **I,** 125–43.
Phillips, John. **I,** 234, 288, 291, **II,** 76, 239.
Phillips, Wm. **I,** 233, 288–89.
Pickering, Timothy. **I,** 48, 158, 167, 182–85, 218. **II,** 245. Opinion of, **O., I,** 164–66. Secession plot, 265–70. Influence in Mass., **1802–12:** 188, 325–26, 333–34, **II,** 4–10, 18–21, 60; on Hart. Con., 88, 104, 119–23, 155.
Pickman, Benj. **I,** 24, **II,** 249.
Pinckney, Charles. **II,** 233.
Pinckney, Charles Cotesworth. **I,** 60–63, 84, 151, 185–98, 306, 309, 315, 332.
Pinckney, Thos. **I,** 60, 157.
Pinkney, Wm. **I,** 275, **II,** 31, 230.
Pitt, Wm. **I,** 112.
Platt, Jones. **I,** 200.
Plumer, Wm. **I,** 264–69, 287, **II,** 255.
Pollard, Benj. **II,** 25.
Powel, *Mrs.* Samuel. **I,** 130, 142.
Preble, *Commodore.* **I,** 234.
Prescott, Wm. **I,** 24, 41, 318, **II,** 132, 145, 237, 249.
Press, freedom of. **I,** 119–23.
Protection. *See* Manufactures.
Putnam, Samuel. **I,** 319. **II,** 88, 119.

Quincy, Josiah (1772–1864). **I,** 41, 250, 302, **II,** 24–25, 32–36, 46, 68, 94, 227, 237–39, 250–53, 284. Letters to **O.,** 33–34; from **O., I,** 49, **II,** 4.
Quincy, Josiah (1802–82). **I,** 217, 220, 254. **II,** 302, 304.

Radcliff, Jacob. **I,** 309, 315,
Railroads. **II,** 285–86.
Randolph, John. **I,** 148, 179, **II,** 55, 65, 122, 127, 228.
Republican party (Jeffersonian), *see* Democratic party.
Rhode Island. **I,** 273, 287, **II,** 13, 106, 135, 166, 274.
Ritchie, Andrew, Jr. **I,** 238, 295, 302, **II,** 253.
Ritchie, Sophia Otis (*Mrs.* A. R., Jr.) **I,** 238, **II,** 296, 300. Letter from **O.,** 211.
Robbins, E. H. **I,** 91. Letter, 288.
Robbins, Jonathan. **I,** 180–81.
Russell, Benj. **I,** 93, 295, 302. **II,** 94.
Rutledge, John, Jr., **I,** 61, 74, 100,

199, 306, 314, **II**, 220–22. Letters to **O.**, **I**, 230, 253, 278–84, 332.

Saltonstall, Leverett. **II**, 102.
Sargent, Daniel, **I**, 330, **II**, 94, 249.
Sargent, L. M. **I**, 297, **II**, 56, 89.
Secession. **1784–1804: I**, 264–71, **II**, 255. **1808: II**, 8–10, 44–45. **1812–13**: 62, 68, 69, 84. **1814–15**: 117–23, 127, 140–58 *passim*, 166, 168, 173–76, 187–88, 192, 284. **1820**: 227–30.
Sedgwick, Theodore. **I**, 48, 177, 182, 185, 259. Letters to **O.**, 259, 307.
Sedition Act. **I**, 103, 106, 110, 115–24, 154–57, 191, 200. **II**, 214.
Sewall, Samuel. **I**, 98, 206. Letter to **O.**, 211.
Shaw, Lemuel. **I**, 41, **II**, 94, 237.
Shays's Rebellion. **I**, 30–31, 48–49, 286.
Sherman, R. M. **II**, 135, 142–43.
Slave Representation. **I**, 263–64, **II**, 82–83, 87, 115, 153–54, 186–87, 192–94, 222–24.
Slavery. Chaps. XXX, XXXII.
Smith, J. Cotton. **II**, 105, 161.
Smith, Nathaniel. **II**, 135, 144–45.
Smith, Robert. **II**, 18.
Smith, Samuel. **I**, 103, 135, 206, 209.
Social Reform. **I**, 258, **II**, 256, 286–87.
South, the. **I**, 64–65, 69–70, 100, 176. **II**, 82, chaps. XXX–XXXII, *passim*. And Hart. Con., 119–23, 127–29. *See* names of States.
South Carolina. **II**, chap, XXXII, 291–94; *see* Pinckney, Rutledge.
Sprague, Peleg. **II**, 271.
Stamp Act Congress. **I**, 8. **II**, 80.
Stewart, *Captain*. **II**, 101.
Stockton, Richard. **II**, 192.
Stoddert, Benj. **II**, 18.
Stone, David. **I**, 177, 201.
Story, Joseph. **I**, 220, 248, 283. **II**, 209, 235. Letter to **O.**, **I**, 122.
Strong, Caleb. **I**, 187, 258, 272, 298. **II**, 28, 93–102, *passim*; *see* Militia question. And Hart. Con., 99–102, 111, 160–62, 181. **O.**'s reports to, 195–99.
Sturges, L. B. Letter to Sherman, **II**, 191.
Sullivan, James. **I**, 36, 41, 272, 326–27, 330, **II**, 11.
Sullivan, Wm. **I**, 41, 217, 227, 291, 301, 302, 309–10, 316–19, **II**, 94, 102, 161–70 *passim*, 209, 237–39, 249. Reports signed by, 195–99. Letters from **O.**, **I**, 227, 289, 296, 318, **II**, 204, 216, 225–27, 237.
Sumner, Increase. **I**, 96, 117.
Sumner, W. H. **I**, 295.
Swift, J. G. **II**, 207–08.
Swift, Zephaniah. **II**, 134, 144–45.

Talleyrand. **I**, 82–83, 151–53, 161, 167–71.
Taney, R. B. **II**, 129.
Taylor, Zachary. **II**, 305–07.
Temperance. **II**, 305.
Temple, *Lady*. **I**, 233.
Thacher, George **II**, 221.
Thomas, J. H. **II**, 129.
Thomas, Joshua. **II**, 133. Letter, 141.
Thorndike, Israel. **I**, 228, 291, 318–19, **II**, 75, 94, 249.
Tibbits, George. **I**, 310.
Ticknor, George. **I**, 255, **II**, 169, 184.
Tilghman, Wm. **I**, 183, **II**, 95.
Tracy, Uriah. **I**, 107, 265–67.
Treadwell, John. **II**, 134.
Trumbull, John, **II**, 191.
Tuckerman, Joseph. **II**, 286–87.
Tudor, Wm. **I**, 222–23, 243, 246–48, **II**, 227–28, 252. Letter to **O.**, **I**, 247.
Tufts, Cotton. **I**, 116.
Turner, *Judge*. **I**, 241.

Van Buren, Martin. **II**, 240, 290.
Van Ness, W. W. **II**, 129.
Van Rensselaer, Stephen. **I**, 24, **II**, 129. Letter from **O.**, **I**, 24.
Van Vechten, Abraham. **I**, 307. Letter to **O.**, **II**, 29.

Varnum, J. B. **I,** 176, **II,** 235.
Vermont. **I,** 273, **II,** 64, 68, 107–08.
Virginia. **I,** 145, 176–77, 186, 263, **II,** 64–65. And Hart.Con., 122–23, 127, 129. And Missouri Compromise, 226–29, 281. And Abolition, 257, 259–61, 265–68, 281–83.

Wadsworth, Peleg. **II,** 140.
Waldo, Daniel. **II,** 133, 191.
Walker, David. **II,** 257–58.
War loans. **II,** 65–67, 71–77.
War of 1812. **II,** chaps. xx–xxi, 95–101, 171, 187, 200.
Ward, Samuel. **II,** 125, 135.
Warren, James. **I,** 12.
Warren, Mercy. (*Mrs.* J. W.). **I,** 12, 132. Letters from **O.,** 97, **II,** 11, 15.
Washington, George. **I,** 31, 34, 50, 60, 126, 132–33, 140–42, 147, 182.
Washington, Martha. **I,** 126, 132, 145–47.
Washington Benevolent Societies. **I,** 300–03, **II,** 68, 122.
Washington D. C. Society in, **1800–01: I,** 143–50; **1815: II,** 164–70; **1817–18:** 205–06, 209–13.
Webster, Daniel. **I,** 249, **II,** 82, 110, 156, 209, 227, 237, 245–46, 252, 290–92, 298, 303–06. Letter from **O.,** 266.
Webster, Noah. **II,** 86–88, 115. Letter from **O.,** 88, 101, 112.
Welles, John. **I,** 24, 291, 302, 309.
West, the. Fed. hostility to. **II,** 119–23, 152–54, 187, 194–95; *see* Louisiana.
West, Benj. **II,** 108, 136, 144–45.
Wheaton, Henry. **II,** 167.
Whig party. **II,** 249, 275, 295–308 *passim.*
Whipple, John. **II,** 274.
Whitmore, Levi. **II,** 102.
Wilde, S. S. **I,** 234, **II,** 133, 191.
Williams, Jonathan. **I,** 130.
Williams, Timothy. **I,** 34.
Willing, Thos. **I,** 127–33.
Winthrop, R. C. Letter from **O., II,** 297.
Wirt, Wm. **I,** 218.
Wolcott, Oliver. **I,** 158, 185, 201.
Wood, Wilkes. **II,** 102.
Woodward, Joseph. **I,** 43, 143. Letter to **O.,** 170.

X. Y. Z. affair. **I,** 80–84, 97, 140, 151, 191.

Yznardi, J. M. **I,** 130.

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